

PD01 - Gratitude and Weakness (Especially In Relation to the Gods)

Post by "Eikadistes" of May 7, 2023 at 1:45 PM

I've been mulling over the concept of "gratitude" with respect to KD1:

KHARISI - ΧΑΡΙΣΙ - χάρισι - /'kʰa.ri:si/ - the dative plural inflection of χάρις (*kháris*) from χαίρω (*khaîrō*, "rejoice", "take pleasure in", "delight") meaning "gratitude", "favour", "partiality", "partisanship", "indebtedness", "benevolence", "care".

Kuria Doxa I indicates that ΧΑΡΙΣΙ (or *kharisi*, variously translated as "gratitude", "favour", "partiality", "partisanship", "indebtedness", "benevolence", and "care") is a form of weakness. Epicurus identifies "gratitude" (*kharisi*) as being incompatible with the character of an animal living their best life. Kuria Doxa I seems emphatic that ΧΑΡΙΣΙ (*kharisi*) is to be discouraged.

In nearly every other extant document, "gratitude" (expressed using forms of *kharis*) is encouraged as an indispensable moral practice:

In his *Epistle To Menoikeus*, Epicurus encourages the old to practice gratitude "so that although old [they] may stay young in good things owing to **gratitude** [*kharin*] for what has occurred." He repeats this point in *Vatican Saying 17*: "the old man [...] has secured the goods about which he was previously not confident by means of his secure sense of **gratitude** [*khariti*]."

In *Vatican Saying 55*, Epicurus seems to encourage the practice of gratitude as a remedy against depression and regret: "Misfortunes must be cured by a sense of **gratitude** [*khariti*] for what has been and the knowledge that what is past cannot be undone". Gratitude seems to be encouraged through the practice of Remembrance, exemplified by Epicurus in his final *Epistle To Idomeneus* as a means of managing pain.

In *Vatican Saying 69*, Epicurus identifies the "**ingratitude** [*akhariston*] of the soul" makes animals "greedy for unlimited variation in its lifestyle". This seems to be a consequence of failing to abide by Nature, exemplified by the failure to recognize the fact that the greatest pleasures are the most abundant, whereas the most rare luxuries always seem to instigate unnecessary stress.

In a fragment, Epicurus reinforces the aforementioned prioritization of desire. He is recorded as having said "I am **grateful** [*kharis*] to blessed Nature, because she made what is necessary easy to acquire and what is hard to acquire unnecessary" (U469).

At numerous points in De Rerum Natura, Lucertius encourages **gratitude** (*grata*) and rejects **thanklessness** (*ingrata*), echoing Epicurus' recommendations in his Epistles (found in at least Book III.931-42, III.955-60, III.1003-1010).

... given all of this, I am wondering: what is unique about the employment of *kharisi* in KD1 that contradicts these other usages?

Post by “Cassius” of May 7, 2023 at 5:37 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

... given all of this, I am wondering: what is unique about the employment of *kharisi* in KD1 that contradicts these other usages

Presumably that a "god" would be so self-sufficient that it would never experience an emotion of receiving something that it lacked previously?

I would see this as tending to show how the human conception of a god is probably constructed logically as an expectation (based on isonomia and similar observations extrapolated out) as much as a subject of particular observation.

In my mind that would not diminish the sincerity of the statement or the expectation of reality that gods do exist, but would parallel other things I see as logical constructs. For example that is how I see "absence of pain" as being the "limit of pleasure" (there are only two so they are defined as the opposite of the other) rather than as a specific positive description of a particular feeling.

So I would see putting a characteristic that is very beneficial to humans in a negative light in relation to the gods as stemming from a similar logical construct. Even pain has actual benefits to us in our world (though we define the best life as having none), but pain would have no benefit to a being living in a perfect state.

Just preliminary thoughts....

Post by “Don” of May 7, 2023 at 10:21 PM

"One who is blessed/completely happy/blissful and imperishable/indestructible has no troubles themselves nor causes troubles for others; as a consequence, they are affected by neither anger nor gratitude; because all this would be an indication of *weakness/sickness/lack of strength*."

ἀσθενεῖ

- weakness
- sickness
- moral weakness, depravity

Being affected by anger as a sickness or weakness makes sense, but why would being affected by gratitude be a sign of weakness? In the *Letter to Herodotus*, Epicurus wrote (10.77) "For troubles and anxieties and feelings of anger and partiality do not accord with bliss, but always imply weakness and fear and dependence upon one's neighbours." This appears to demonstrate that the negative aspects of anger or gratitude 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.

I would answer yes to Cassius's sentiment when he says:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

a "god" would be so self-sufficient that it would never experience an emotion of receiving something that it lacked previously?

PD1 refers to those who are incorruptible and completely blessed. So, we "mere" humans should show gratitude.

We need to also take into account what Diogenes Laertius reports that:

[121] Two sorts of happiness can be conceived, the one the highest possible, such as the gods enjoy, which cannot be augmented, the other admitting addition and subtraction of pleasures.

It seems there could easily be two standards when it comes to gratitude as well, one "such as the gods enjoy" and one for the rest of us who should be thankful for our pleasures that we experience.

Post by "Godfrey" of May 7, 2023 at 11:39 PM

There's a pleasurable aspect to gratitude as well, such as the gratitude of waking up to a beautiful day in a beautiful place. Whereas normal folk may feel a pleasing sense of gratitude in

this case, apparently a god would experience the pleasure but no gratitude.

Post by “Don” of May 8, 2023 at 10:21 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

There's a pleasurable aspect to gratitude as well, such as the gratitude of waking up to a beautiful day in a beautiful place. Whereas normal folk may feel a pleasing sense of gratitude in this case, apparently a god would experience the pleasure but no gratitude.

I *think* part of it is that a god is literally by definition filled with maximum pleasure already and only would experience the variety of pleasure expressed in [PD18](#).

Quote from PD18

Pleasure in the flesh admits no increase when once the pain of want has been removed; after that it only admits of variation...

Post by “Little Rocker” of May 8, 2023 at 10:56 PM

Yeah, I've wondered about the same thing. I seem to remember that concern showing up in the objections section of a paper I read on Epicurean gratitude by Ben Rider (attached in its pre-published form)

Post by “Don” of May 9, 2023 at 5:16 AM

Great paper! Thanks for sharing. The take on the gods near the end seems spot on from my perspective:

Quote

The gods exist, but because they are 'blessed and indestructible' they need not feel gratitude. Gratitude indicates weakness and is relevant only for those who have deficiencies and thus need others to help or benefit them. That humans feel anger or gratitude reveals our limitations and dependency. So, if wisdom enables a human to 'live as a god among men' (Ep. Men. 135), would not a wise and virtuous person also have no need for gratitude?

The answer, it seems to me, must be 'no.' The fact that gods feel no gratitude does not mean that we should not; though Epicureans seek to emulate the gods' tranquility and happiness, no human can attain their invulnerability or immortality, and any desire to do so would be unnatural and empty.

It is important to remember, in this context, that for Epicureans all virtues—like moderation and justice—are defined not absolutely, by an independent objective standard. They are instrumentally valuable because they contribute to a pleasurable life, and so what counts as virtuous in a case depends on what in fact produces happiness (Ep. Men. 132).

...for indestructible and perfectly self-sufficient gods, gratitude is not a value, while for vulnerable and deficient humans, it is. No matter how wise we become, we cannot eliminate these facts about what we are. Gratitude is part of how we achieve what limited and imperfect self-sufficiency we can obtain.

Post by "Cassius" of May 9, 2023 at 7:11 AM

"It is important to remember, in this context, that for Epicureans all virtues—like moderation and justice—are defined not absolutely, by an independent objective standard. They are instrumentally valuable because they contribute to a pleasurable life, and so what counts as virtuous in a case depends on what in fact produces happiness (Ep. Men. 132)."

Definitely a paper I want to read. That simple statement has profound implications, and I think is very difficult to appreciate without working on a drastic overhaul of the way we think. The same action that we normally see as courageous becomes in fact foolhardy in the wrong circumstances. The action isn't just "courageous, but sadly turned out wrong" but in fact no longer meets the definition of courageous in the first place.

At least in my mind that is very hard to appreciate. My mind wants to say courage is courage is courage and place the blame for a bad result somewhere else (luck? fate? gods?) rather than

think that courage has no set definition that applies at all times and places.

But that seems to be exactly what Epicurus is saying, and he hammers it home apparently in his own words in those statements about "justice" at the end of the PDs.

Post by “Cassius” of May 9, 2023 at 7:15 AM

One more thing -- I think that last observation from the paper is the key to understanding PD5 and Epicurus' whole position on virtue. [PD05](#) isn't the way to accommodate Epicurus to Stoicism and reconcile them as similar, it's the way - by explaining the totally different perspectives on virtue - to show how drastically incompatible they are.

“It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and well and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and well and justly without living pleasantly. Whenever any one of these is lacking, when, for instance, the man is not able to live wisely, though he lives well and justly, it is impossible for him to live a pleasant life.” Hicks (1925)

Post by “Don” of May 9, 2023 at 8:06 AM

Basically, [PD05](#) says, to me, you can't live pleasantly without living virtuously BUT virtue is not the end/goal. The virtues contribute to living pleasantly, and living pleasantly is a result of living virtuously. But one's eye should always be on the pleasant life lived.

Post by “Kalosyni” of May 9, 2023 at 9:35 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

one's eye should always be on the pleasant life lived.

And you could think of gratitude as a kind of awareness and recognition that you are living pleasantly and pleasurable - therefore gratitude is always a necessary element, as Nate pointed out in the very first post:

[Quote from Nate](#)

In nearly every other extant document, "gratitude" (expressed using forms of kharis) is encouraged as an indispensable moral practice:

Although I wouldn't call it a "moral" practice, but rather a wise practice 😊

Post by "Cassius" of May 9, 2023 at 10:14 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Basically, [PD05](#) says, to me, you can't live pleasantly without living virtuously BUT virtue is not the end/goal. The virtues contribute to living pleasantly, and living pleasantly is a result of living virtuously. But one's eye should always be on the pleasant life lived.

Yes i think what you are saying is the correct statement of the Epicurean view, but I don't see PD5 saying that one's eye should be on pleasure than on virtue. It doesn't explicitly or even implicitly say that, does it? (I would think you have to go to Torquatus or to Diogenes of Oinoanda to hit that point home.) In the case of PD5 he seems to be equating the two phrases ("living virtuously" with "living pleasantly") and it seems to me that you have to understand something else which is not stated to make sense of the equivalence.

I agree that one unstated point is, as you say, that (1) the goal is pleasure rather than virtue.

But the other unstated presumption is that (2) virtue is not absolutely tied to a certain set of facts, just like pleasure is not tied to a certain set of facts. (Eating ice cream is sometimes pleasurable and sometimes not, right?)

Actually maybe I should ask, Don, do you agree with this sentence from the paper as written, or would you modify it?

"It is important to remember, in this context, that for Epicureans all virtues—like moderation and justice—are defined not absolutely, by an independent objective standard. They are instrumentally valuable because they contribute to a pleasurable life, and so what counts as virtuous in a case depends on what in fact produces happiness (Ep. Men. 132)."

Post by "Don" of May 9, 2023 at 10:17 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Actually maybe I should ask, Don, do you agree with this sentence from the paper as written, or would you modify it?

"It is important to remember, in this context, that for Epicureans all virtues—like moderation and justice—are defined not absolutely, by an independent objective standard. They are instrumentally valuable because they contribute to a pleasurable life, and so what counts as virtuous in a case depends on what in fact produces happiness (Ep. Men. 132)."

Yes. I agree with the quoted passage.

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 9, 2023 at 12:29 PM

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

Yeah, I've wondered about the same thing. I seem to remember that concern showing up in the objections section of a paper I read on Epicurean gratitude by Ben Rider (attached in its pre-published form)

This is *precisely* what I needed. **Thanks!**

"VII. Gratitude is weakness?"

I argue that, for Epicureans, gratitude is necessary for a happy human life. But some passages seem to say that gratitude is actually a sign of weakness. In particular, this claim appears as a premise in Epicurus' argument that we have no reason to anticipate rewards and punishments from the gods:

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. (KD I; compare Letter to Herodotus 76-77, Cicero, On the Nature of the Gods 1.45 = IG I-16)

The gods exist, but because they are 'blessed and indestructible' they need not feel gratitude. Gratitude indicates weakness and is relevant only for those who have deficiencies and thus need others to help or benefit them. That humans feel anger or gratitude reveals our limitations

and dependency. So, if wisdom enables a human to 'live as a god among men' (Ep. Men. 135), would not a wise and virtuous person also have no need for gratitude?

The answer, it seems to me, must be 'no.' The fact that gods feel no gratitude does not mean that we should not; though Epicureans seek to emulate the gods' tranquility and happiness, no human can attain their invulnerability or immortality, and any desire to do so would be unnatural and empty.

It is important to remember, in this context, that for Epicureans all virtues—like moderation and justice—are defined not absolutely, by an independent objective standard. They are instrumentally valuable because they contribute to a pleasurable life, and so what counts as virtuous in a case depends on what in fact produces happiness (Ep. Men. 132). We see this most clearly in Epicurus' analysis of justice: Justice exists because of 'a pledge of reciprocal usefulness' (KD 31), a 'pact about neither harming another nor being harmed' (KD 33). Justice is 'in general outline' the same for all humans, but what counts as just may vary depending on circumstances—'the peculiarities of a region,' for instance (KD 36)—and when circumstances change, it could happen that a law that was originally useful and just 'no longer possesses the nature of justice' (KD 37; also KD 38). We should not become fixated on abstract notions but instead 'simply look to the facts' (KD 37).

In the same way, then, it is unsurprising that, for indestructible and perfectly self-sufficient gods, gratitude is not a value, while for vulnerable and deficient humans, it is. No matter how wise we become, we cannot eliminate these facts about what we are. Gratitude is part of how we achieve what limited and imperfect self-sufficiency we can obtain."

This seems to be consistent with the position that has thus far been enumerated.

I have been trying to find more fragments to flesh-out Epicurean religiosity, largely through Philodemus. It seems to me that he (and apparently Hermarchus, based on fragmentary attestation I'm still trying to organize) had concerns about the status of the gods' social lives and their speech patterns; that, combined with the analysis of gratitude, which is a seemingly human-unique, conscious behavioral practice (there are better words for that) Not to suddenly follow a distracting tangent, but this lends a lot of credence to the "*Realist interpretation*" of the Epicurean deities.

I am leaning away from the "*Idealist interpretation*" because it seems to rob the god(s) of blessedness.

I am also approaching this inquiry with an assumption: *I personally have assumed that the gods were once not gods.* My conception of a deity is a being who, through choice and personal development, has mastered the natural ethical path to achieve a perfect, animal life; this carries an additional assumption that they must exist, because, if such beings do not exist in an infinite universe, than choice if futile and ethics is an exercise in futility.

I think that KD1 seems incompatible with the "*Idealist interpretation*" if we rob the god(s) of their blessed ability to make perfect choices, having created (through development) a supportive circle of excellent companions; if gods are just inspiring thought-forms generated by cosmic particles that have intermingled through the void, they aren't much different than inspiring shapes in the clouds or any other experience that can be explained as an optical illusion.

As a side-note, perhaps Lucretius is assuming *too much* of a poetic license in describing Epicurus as a god if Epicurus (and, as it seems, Philodemus) had such specific preconceptions of the forms of deities.

Post by "Cassius" of May 9, 2023 at 12:52 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

about the status of the gods' social lives and their speech patterns; that, combined with the analysis of gratitude, which is a seemingly human-unique, conscious behavioral practice (there are better words for that)

Yes it would be pushing the envelope for the Epicureans to be talking about such things if they viewed them as wholly abstractions.

As for whether the gods evolved to that state, I tend to hesitate there, and to consider this to be a more complex application of the eternality issue - I am not sure there. Maybe individual instances of types of gods in particular intermundia evolved toward and arrived at perfection, but if there was never a start to the universe it's hard to say that applies to the whole.

Evolution might be another aspect of human experience that does not apply to gods.

Post by "Eikadistes" of May 9, 2023 at 1:24 PM

That leads me to another question:

Were/are the god(s) animal(s)?

If not, how can a feeling-being be "eternal" in the temporal sense of things?

Post by “Cassius” of May 9, 2023 at 1:31 PM

Well that's the "quasi-" body material in Velleius / On the nature of the gods, right?

Post by “Don” of May 9, 2023 at 1:53 PM

Here's a section from my Menoikeus translation:

Quote from Don

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 ("figure, image, sign") of blessedness.

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

These are the exact words used in the first of the [Principal Doctrines](#) (Κυριαὶ Δοξαί): Τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον "One who is blessed and imperishable." (Note, these are again singular.) The words held the first spot in the [Principal Doctrines](#), and Epicurus chooses this as the first element of noble living of which to remind Menoikeus. Πρώτον, indeed! Epicurus obviously placed a great deal of importance on this topic so it behooves us to study it in-depth, to engage in some μελέτη.

μακάριον

This word is often translated as "blessed, fortunate, wealthy, 'well-off.'" There appears to be no certain etymology of the root [makar] or the longer form [makarios/on]. It

appears to possibly have something to do with being wealthy, either literally or figuratively. Taking Ancient Mythology Economically by Morris Silver has a very interesting section on the origins of the word. This is yet another example of the inadequacy of using one word to translate from one language to another.

ἄφθαρτον

LSJ gives the definition of "incorruptible, eternal, immortal, uncorrupted, undecaying" and gives references to Epicurus, Philodemus, and Diogenes of Oenoanda. At its root, the word is α- "not" + φθαρτον "destructible, perishable." LSJ states φθαρτον is the opposite of ἀίδιος "everlasting, eternal" (related to ἀεί "ever, always") which poses an interesting question: Why did Epicurus choose to use ἄφθαρτον instead of ἀίδιος or ἀθάνατος? φθαρτον is related to θνητός "liable to death, mortal, opposite: ἀθάνατος [athanatos]" (LSJ) φθαρτον is also connected to the verb φθείρω "destroy, pass away, cease to be, perish." It seems that Epicurus didn't want to evoke that the gods (a god?) were simply immortal or eternal but that he wanted to impress upon us the sense that they would not pass away or cease to be. This is in contrast to everything else composed of atoms and void. Everything else is subject to be φθαρτον; only the gods are ἄφθαρτον! How can this be? Could it be that they are ἄφθαρτον precisely because they are mental concepts? That's one of the reasons I find Sedley's so-called "idealist" nature of the [Epicurean gods](#) intriguing.

I have also seen arguments that the stress should not be on the "eternal," as in everlasting in time, but rather the "incorruptible," as in the state of being. A "god" is "incorruptible" or "not able to be corrupted or to decay." They are unaffected by the vicissitudes of fortune, unaffected by anger or gratitude. To me, this is an intriguing perspective and gives a possible reason why Epicurus made the decision to use ἄφθαρτον and not an alternative that evokes the "eternal in time" connotation like ἀθάνατος. From my perspective, this argument is a strong one and deserves some study and thought. For now, let's move on to see if there are more clues.

Display More

Post by "Don" of May 9, 2023 at 5:37 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

It seems to me that he (and apparently Hermarchus, based on fragmentary attestation I'm still trying to organize) had concerns about the status of the gods' social lives and

their speech patterns

If you compile those sources, I'd be very interested to see them.

Post by “Joshua” of May 9, 2023 at 6:45 PM

I'm posting this as food for thought, and because I don't see it suggested elsewhere:

Perhaps we're reading it wrong? The usual reading is that the gods are "unaffected by [hypothetical] anger [that they might otherwise feel] and [hypothetical] gratitude [that they might otherwise feel]."

Could it be credibly inferred that the anger and gratitude that the gods are immune to is *our* anger and gratitude?

It doesn't matter whether your words are "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" or "into thy hands I commend my spirit"; the result is the same. The gods, by virtue of being gods, are necessarily deaf to human griefs, as well as human joys.

Under this new reading, the first Principal Doctrine falls in line with the recurring literary devices that mark the whole series; the *Chiasmus*, and the *Antimetabole*. I can summarize a few examples, with the caveat that brevity is the mother of misinterpretation.

1. Do not trouble about the gods, for the gods do not trouble about you.
2. When we are, death has not come. When death has come, we are not.
- 3 and 4. What is good is easy to get, what is terrible is easy to endure.
5. It is not possible to live pleasantly without living [x], and it is not possible to live [x] without living pleasantly.
6. Take courage from other men, or at least from men who can give courage.
11. If suspicion of nature did not trouble us, we should not trouble to study nature.

I write these merely to isolate the main point--that the literary devices are constantly repeated, and are there for a reason.

From Wikipedia;

Quote

Chiasmus derives its effectiveness from its symmetrical structure. The structural symmetry of the chiasmus imposes the impression upon the reader or listener that the entire argument has been accounted for.[13] In other words, chiasmus creates only two sides of an argument or idea for the listener to consider, and then leads the listener to favor one side of the argument.

As I say, food for thought. And thanks to my old copy of Walter Harding's edition of *Walden* for alerting me to these literary devices.

Quote

When my hoe tinkled against the stones, that music echoed to the woods and the sky, and was an accompaniment to my labor which yielded an instant and immeasurable crop. It was no longer beans that I hoed, nor I that hoed beans; and I remembered with as much pity as pride, if I remembered at all, my acquaintances who had gone to the city to attend the oratorios.

-Henry David Thoreau

Post by “Cassius” of May 9, 2023 at 6:48 PM

Definitely an interesting suggestion. I tend to think the standard interpretation makes the most sense, but on the other hand there are lots of subtleties to consider.

Post by “Joshua” of May 9, 2023 at 6:59 PM

I should hate to be guilty of Norman DeWitt's unforgivable sin--amending the text!

Post by “TauPhi” of May 9, 2023 at 7:41 PM

I'd like to present my view on gratitude among gods and their nature (Were/are the god(s) animal(s)?). I'll attach two quotes from Letter to Menoecus and elaborate on them. All criticism is welcome as I spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to understand the nature of gods from a perspective of Epicurean philosophy and I'm still not sure if I got it right.

(1) On gratitude:

[...]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.[...]

We cannot treat gods as reflections of humans, therefore gratitude, as any other human feelings, must be alien to gods.

(2) Were/are the god(s) animal(s)?:

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

Immortality of individual gods is not permitted by Epicurean physics (as there are only 3 things that are eternal and indestructible: individual atoms (not compounds of them); the void and the universe itself as an infinite container of infinite number of everlasting atoms)). [Epicurean gods](#) have no names. There are no individual gods mentioned anywhere and for good reason. There are infinite visions of gods, however, that we can perceive because in eternal universe there must be infinite number of gods and our minds are capable of detecting some of the visions.

[Epicurean gods](#) can be viewed as immortal only when seen as collective of infinite number of blessed beings. On individual level they must be creatures that reached the state of blessedness but they are alive, created from compounds of atoms and therefore mortal and destructible.

So, were/are the god(s) animal(s)? The answer is yes if gods are considered as separate beings (blessed but created from compounds of atoms and therefore mortal and destructible living beings). The answer is no if we treat [Epicurean gods](#) as everlasting visions and ideals of blessedness to which human should aspire.

Post by “Cassius” of May 9, 2023 at 7:49 PM

Tau Phi just for background I am curious as to how many of the texts you have reviewed in this. Have you gone into the Dirk Obbirk (sp?) material in On Piety as well as the Velleius section of "On the Nature of the Gods"? I really haven't done an exhaustive review of what is out there. Have you done that because just having a list of things to check would be helpful to people studying this.

Post by “Joshua” of May 9, 2023 at 7:56 PM

*Obbink

Post by “Don” of May 9, 2023 at 8:13 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

I should hate to be guilty of Norman DeWitt's unforgivable sin--amending the text!

I don't think you're amending the text at all. That's an interesting interpretation. I'll have to dig into the Greek but you may be onto something!

Post by “Joshua” of May 9, 2023 at 9:29 PM

I should also note that this is very timely, since our podcast discussion on *Epicurus and His Philosophy* will turn to "The New Piety" after we finish "The New Hedonism".

Post by “Don” of May 9, 2023 at 10:36 PM

[TauPhi](#) : You bring up some interesting points. I had a few thoughts as I was reading your post.

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

[Epicurean gods](#) can be viewed as immortal only when seen as collective of infinite number of blessed beings. On individual level they must be creatures that reached the state of blessedness but they are alive, created from compounds of atoms and therefore mortal and destructible.

This section I found intriguing. The idea of an individual god vs the gods as a collective made me think of the scholia attached to [PD01](#).

[Quote from Hicks translation at Perseus Project](#)

[PD01](#). A blessed and eternal being has no trouble himself and brings no trouble upon any other being ; hence he is exempt from movements of anger and partiality, for every such movement implies weakness [Elsewhere he 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.]

Scholia ("ancient commentary") section: [ἐν ἄλλοις δέ φησι τοὺς θεοὺς λόγῳ θεωρητοὺς, οὓς μὲν κατ' ἀριθμὸν ὑφ' ἑστέων, οὓς δὲ καθ' ὁμοειδεῖαν ἐκ τῆς συνεχοῦς ἐπιρρύσεως τῶν ὁμοίων εἰδώλων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀποτετελεσμένῳ ἀνθρωποειδῶς.]

Honestly, the "numerically distinct" and images and the rest have always befuddled me. Breaking it down, the "discernable through reason alone" here is a translation of simply λόγῳ θεωρητοὺς "'discernable' by/through reason, thinking, " (dative of [λόγος](#)). I don't see evidence of the word alone, but I suppose it's implied. LSJ includes the following in their definition: λόγῳ θεωρητά mentally conceived, opp. sensibly perceived. So, per that definition of that phrase, we can say that *The gods are (only) mentally conceived, not sensibly perceived*. Does that mean they can *never* be sensibly perceived, i.e., perceived by the physical senses and so not actually corporeal? Then the scholia talks about "others" as in "other gods"? Are there several different kinds of gods? Some can only be mentally conceived, and others are produced by continuous "similar images" *directed to* the same spot? Those images are the familiar εἰδώλων (eidolon), the films/simulacra/images being shed by bodies. The gods are an odd lot!

Oh, I didn't set out to resolve anything... just throwing more grist in the mill 😊

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 9, 2023 at 11:03 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Nate](#)

It seems to me that he (and apparently Hermarchus, based on fragmentary attestation I'm still trying to organize) had concerns about the status of the

gods' social lives and their speech patterns

If you compile those sources, I'd be very interested to see them.

My access to primary sources is limited, but these reputable sources feature secondary attestation:

Quote

"One specific thesis is however attributed to Hermarchus, cited at Philodemus *On Gods*, PHerc. 152/7, col. 13.20-41:25 the gods breathe and are not mute but converse with each other, since felicity is incompatible with lack of conversation. He is even said to have provided an argument: the gods are living beings, and the notion of a living being entails that of breathing, just as that of a fish that of water and of a bird that of wings; breathing, we may infer, is a 'permanent property' of the gods. Philodemus col. 4.8-13 adds that their language is Greek. He also tells us, col. 10.25-30, that the Epicureans not only accept the existence of the gods of the Panhellenes but say that there are even more. But we are unable to determine to what extent the ideas found in our later sources may be traced back to Hermarchus and Epicurus." (*The Cambridge Guide To Hellenistic Philosophy* 456-457)

And also:

Quote

"Philodemus asserts the connection in fr. 13, 'Those who attempt to deprive them of imperishability must [also] deprive them of blessedness'; and the same idea seems to underlie the discussion of the gods' use of language which he cites from Epicurus' successor Hermarchus in cols. xiii.36-xiv.6:

'And one must say that they use speech and converse with one another; for, he says, we would not consider them more fortunate and indestructible [...] if they did not, but rather similar to mute human beings. For since in fact all of us who are not maimed make use of language, to say that the gods either are maimed or do not resemble us in this respect (there being no other way either they or we could give shape to utterances) is extremely foolish, especially since conversation with those like themselves is a source of indescribable pleasure to the good.'

[...] Hermarchus wrote a treatise *Against Empedocles* in twenty-two books, and Bernays' suggestion that Plutarch *On the Cessation of Oracles* 420c-e [...] is derived from it has been generally accepted. Certainly it is the most economical hypothesis that this vast work was both Plutarch's source for the Epicurean attack on Empedocles and Philodemus' for this argument and for the further points about divine physiology

for which he cites Hermarchus by name in cols. xiii-xiv." (*Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans* 218-219)

Post by "Don" of May 9, 2023 at 11:05 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

1. Do not trouble about the gods, for the gods do not trouble about you.

I'm beginning to like @Joshua's interpretation. It also seems to correspond to the Letter of Menoikeus section:

Quote from Letter to Menoikeus

So, they (i.e, the hoi polloi, "the many") believe the greatest evils are brought to the wicked from the gods as well as the greatest aid to the good, because the hoi polloi are believing that the gods accept those who resemble themselves who are similar through all excellences and goodness; all those not of their sort are strange and alien.

But this idea that the gods bestow evils and aid is a mistaken idea about the gods, according to Epicurus. The gods are not swayed by prayer or sacrifice or ...gratitude to them.

[PD01](#): Broken up:

Τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἀφθαρτον οὔτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχει οὔτε ἄλλω παρέχει,

(singular) That which is blissful and immortal has no troubles itself, nor does it cause trouble for others,

ὥστε οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται:

so that it is not affected by anger or gratitude (Saint-Andre)

ὥστε with the indicative, to express the actual result with emphasis.

συνέχεται (3rd person singular middle/passive indicative < συνέχομαι can mean (as far as I can tell, anyone please correct me!) "afflicted with" but other connotations are impelled or disturbed, constrained by, trapped.

So, if ὥστε introduces a "result" of that which is blessed/incorruptible not causing trouble to itself or others... Wait, that sounds an awful lot like "neither harm nor be harmed." Hmm... Not

the same words as [PD31](#), but similar sentiment?

ἐν ἀσθενεῖ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον.

for all such things come about through weakness

More food for thought...

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 10, 2023 at 12:05 AM

As I read it based on those sources, Hermarchus (and/or Philodemus) were thinking along the following lines:

- 1. The gods are blessed (KD1).**
- 2. *b* is an element of the blessed life.**
- 3. The gods must therefor possess *b* quality.**

In the previous citations, the Boys argue that the gods have friends:

- 1. The gods are blessed (KD1).**
- 2. Friendship is an element of the blessed life.**
- 3. The gods must have friends.**

At *first* glance, this argument does not seems to work for gratitude:

- 1. The gods are blessed (KD1).**
- 2. Gratitude is an element of the blessed life.**
- 3. The gods must be grateful.**

But given the point that [Joshua](#) suggested (that "**anger**" and "**favor**" in *KD1* are not descriptions of the gods' personal qualities, but rather, examples of human provocations toward which the gods are deaf) it seems to be more consistent; I have trouble accepting that living beings that have friends and enjoy having conversations would not experience gratitude toward the blessed nature that allows them to enjoy the pleasure of those friendships.

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 10, 2023 at 12:17 AM

I really like that proposition [Joshua](#) . That really answers the question in my mind.

KD1 is just identifying that the gods are immune to the petitions of Earthlings.

It does **not** provide a blueprint for *Humans Pursuing Happiness* that discourages the practice of gratitude.

Post by “TauPhi” of May 10, 2023 at 7:31 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Tau Phi just for background I am curious as to how many of the texts you have reviewed in this. Have you gone into the Dirk Obbirk (sp?) material in On Piety as well as the Velleius section of "On the Nature of the Gods"? I really haven't done an exhaustive review of what is out there. Have you done that because just having a list of things to check would be helpful to people studying this.

[Cassius](#) I'm afraid I'm going to leave you a bit disappointed regarding sources for my previous entry. I based my views on books by Polish author called Adam Krokiewicz. He was a university professor who published several works on ancient Greek philosophy including two books on Epicurus. The first one was called 'Nauka Epikura' (transl.: Teachings of Epicurus) published in 1929 and the second one called 'Hedonism Epikura' (transl.: Hedonism of Epicurus) published in 1960. He was Polish equivalent of Cyril Bailey, more or less. I don't believe these books were ever translated into English. If there are any Polish speaking members here, I can refer you to the second book (pages 172-194) for discussion on the nature of gods.

Not to leave you completely disappointed [Cassius](#) , I list below main sources Adam Krokiewicz quotes in his discussion on the nature of gods (I didn't study these myself):

Cicero - De Natura Deorum

The scholia attached to [PD01](#) (also mentioned by [Don](#) above)

Philodemos On the Gods

Sextus Empiricus - Adversus Mathematicos IX

W. Scott - The Physical Constitution of the [Epicurean Gods](#) - Journal of Philology XII 1883, p.219

[Don](#) I appreciate your addition of grist in this mill. I like the idea of infinite, individual and mortal gods vs eternal eidola of blessed beings because it's the best idea I found that is consistent with Epicurean physics (atomism), epistemology (eidola) and ethics (blessedness) at the same time.

I don't particularly like to talk about gods in general as I almost always feel like a blind man talking about the beauty of yesterday sunset but I'll add one more thing that I came up with on that topic. It's just my personal opinion and may be as accurate as the description of that sunset, though.

I like to think that human perception of [Epicurean gods](#) is similar to our perception of rainbows. Please mind I don't equate rainbows to gods. Rainbows aren't sentient and are perceived by us by the sense of vision whereas [Epicurean gods](#) are sentient and experienced directly by our minds through eidola. I'm just trying to show the essence of these perceptions.

So are rainbows real? They are because we can see them. At the same time they are just refraction of light in water droplets. We can admire their beauty briefly if the conditions are right. Rainbows like [Epicurean gods](#) cannot, however, influence anything. Individual rainbows are not immortal but we can be entirely sure that we'll observe rainbows for as long as light, rain and the Earth exist. In that sense rainbows are immortal. Visual refraction of light in water droplets are like mental perceptions of atomic layers of divine blessedness. If that makes any sense.

Post by “Cassius” of May 10, 2023 at 7:41 AM

Very interesting!

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

I based my views on books by Polish author called Adam Krokiewicz.

A Polish Cyril Bailey is very interesting. I am not a big fan of Cyril Bailey's take on Epicurus but I feel sure you mean his scholarship more than has personal impression. I am curious about how Krokiewicz fits in that regard in terms of his ultimate assessment of Epicurus. Do you find him to be a supporter of Epicurus' ethics and general worldview who looks for reasonable constructs where the texts are unclear (sort of like DeWitt), or more scholastically neutral?

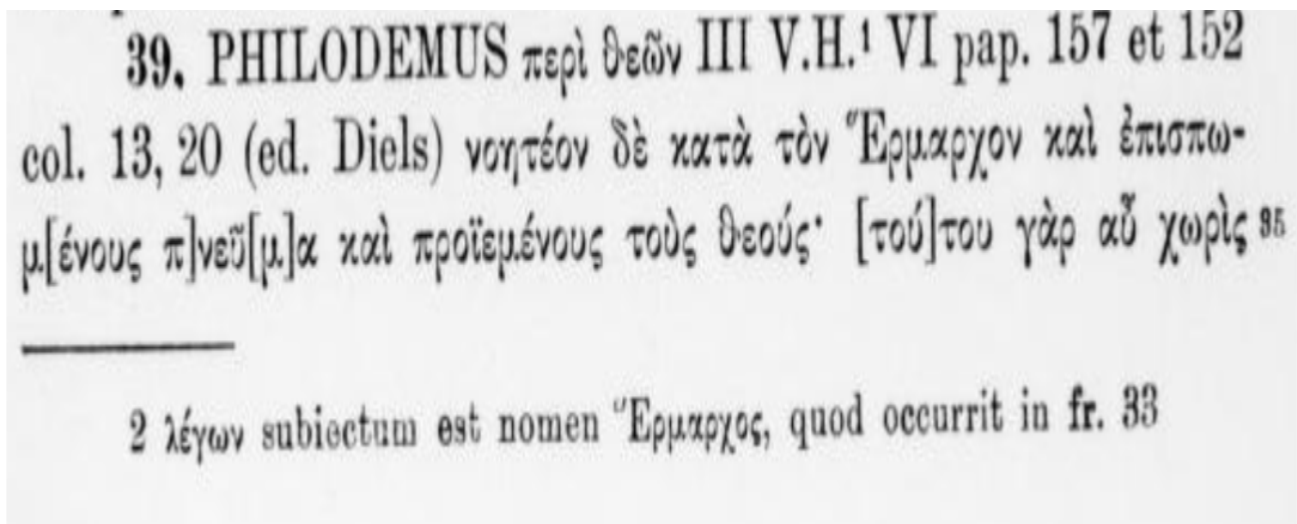
Post by “Don” of May 10, 2023 at 8:13 AM

[Eikadistes](#) : Came across this compilation of Hermarchus's fragments. However, it's in German, Greek, and Latin, but it's a start:

[Der Epikureer Hermarchos \[microform\] : Krohn, Karl, 1895- : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Greek texts with commentary in German and notes in Latin
archive.org

Post by “Don” of May 10, 2023 at 9:09 AM



From the Hermarchus book.

The "breathing" seems to be reconstructed from:

ἐπισπωμ(.....)εὐ(.)α

I'd have to see the digitized manuscript to accept πνεῦμα from that fragmentary text.

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

That "breath, air, wind, spirit" could have multiple interpretations.

Even ἐπισπωμ(ενους) seems to be related to aorist middle participle of ἐφέπω (ephépō); Mid. to follow, pursue.

The transliterated προιεμένους appears related to προίημι which *can* mean "utter sounds" but that is a long way from conversation.

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

PS

Here is the rest of fragment 39...

οὐδ' ἔτι τοιαῦτα ζῶα νοήσομ[εν], οἷα προειλήφαμεν, ὡς οὐδ' ἰχθυῶς
ἀπροσδεεῖ[ς] τοῦ ὕδατος οὐδ' ὄρνιθας πτερῶν εἰς τὴν δι' ἀέ[ρος φ]οράν·
ο[ὐ γ]ὰρ μᾶλλον τὰ τοιαῦτ' ἐννοεῖται . . τοιο[ῦτ' ἀ]ναπν[οήν] . . ἢ
λιπ . . ἀπηρεσ[τάτους] . . [δι' ἀφθα]ρσίαν ἄλλο[ίους] . . εὐ[ήθ]ειαν, &
5 πολλά [δί]οιδ' . . τοῦτο δὲ νοητ[έον] ὡ[ς] . . μήτε δ' εἶναι πεζ[ὰ μ]ήτε
φθ[όγ]γον ἔμ[με]τρ[ον] οὐ προσδεόμενον ἀναπνοῆς οὐ ῥητέον, ὡς οὐδὲ
[χ]ιόνα χ[ωρί]ς λε[υκό]τητος ἢ πῦρ <ἀν> ἄνευ θερμότητος. καὶ φωνῆ δὲ
χρῆσθαι καὶ ὁμιλεῖα τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ῥητέον· οὐ γὰρ μᾶλλον εὐ-
δαίμονας καὶ ἀδιαλύτους νοήσομεν, φησί, μὴ φωνοῦντας μηδ' ἀλλήλοις
10 διαλεγόμενους, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἐνεοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὁμοίους. τῷ γὰρ ὄντι φωνῆ
χρωμένων ἡμῶν ὅ[σοι] μὴ τι πεπηρώμεθα, τοὺς θεοὺς ἢ πεπηρωῶσθαι ἢ
μὴ κατὰ τ[ο]ῦθ' ἡμῖν ὁμοιωῶσθαι, μηδ' [ἐτέρ]ως μηδετέρων ἐκκοπτόντων
ἀναφθέγματα, [καὶ] ὑπερεύηδες, ἄ[λλως τε] καὶ τῆς πρὸς τοὺς ὁμοίου[ς]
τοῖς σπουδαίο[ις] κοινολογίας ἄφατον ἡδονὴν καταχεοῦσης. καὶ νῆ Δία
15 γε τὴν Ἑλληνίδα νομιστέον ἔχειν αὐτοὺς διάλεκτον, ἢ μὴ πόρρω, τὰς
φω[νά]ς δὲ σὺν [λό]γῳ καὶ τ[ρα]νεσ[τάτας καὶ ὀρθοτάτας, ὥσπερ κατὰ
τὴν Ἑλλάδα οἱ] σοφοί] πάντε[ς, καθόσον σ]οφοί, λέ]γονται μὴ πολὺ
διαφερούσαις κατὰ τὰς ἀρθρώσεις χρῆσθαι φωναῖς. καὶ μόνους οἶδαμεν
γεγονότας σ[ο]φοὺς Ἑλληνίδι γλώττῃ χρωμένους, ἐπεὶ καὶ προσαλλήλων
20 εἰς κοιν]ολογίας [δια]λέκ[των γιν]ομένων ἢ γλωττῶν τ[ούτ]ων π[λείστον]
ἔχει καὶ σὺν οὐ μόνον κατὰ πόλεις Ἑλλ[ληνίδας] . . α . . α . . [ἀλλ]ὰ

I got called away yesterday and didn't have a chance to follow-up on this post. Just realized this morning that #39 had more to it! I'm going to work on done translation because this is going to change my perspective, I'm betting 🤔

PPS. Here's the papyri.info entry for Philodemus's On the Gods

[DCLP/Trismegistos 62386 = LDAB 3551](#)

Makes it a little easier to copy and paste text and gives a better idea of the condition of the papyri itself.

Post by “Cassius” of May 10, 2023 at 9:22 AM

I took the liberty of clarifying Nate's thread title so it will be more easily findable in the future by adding "(Especially In Relation to the Gods)" to indicate that we are talking mostly about the issue of gratitude in relation to divinity.

Nate if you prefer another way of expressing that please feel free to rename it again. Seems like in the future it will be easier to find if it references these issues as related to the divinity question.

I also want to link here a new thread I am starting that stems from this discussion but would take it too far afield ---

Thread

[Epicurus And Pleasure As The Awareness Of Smooth Motion](#)

I have been meaning to post this for a while, but the recent thread on the nature of the gods ([link here](#)) causes me to post this now, but separately, so as not to derail that thread.

It seems to me as we've previously discussed a few times, but not at length, that it is entirely possible (and maybe probable or definite, I just haven't examined the sources on this recently) that Epicurus agreed with the Cyreniac position that pleasure is intimately related to (constitutes?) the concept of "smooth..."



Cassius

May 10, 2023 at 9:18 AM

I think here in this thread we continue to talk about the main topic of how the gratitude issue with gods and humans plays into practical conclusions.

In the other thread I'd like to start a discussion that goes in a different direction, first going back into questioning to what extent Epicurus endorsed the view that Diogenes Laertius attributes to the Cyreniatics as viewing pleasure related to "smooth motion." I would like to be able to cite whether Democritus had a view on that, but at the moment I don't know. That's a topic for the other thread.

Post by "TauPhi" of May 10, 2023 at 11:30 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Very interesting!

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

I based my views on books by Polish author called Adam Krokiewicz.

A Polish Cyril Bailey is very interesting. I am not a big fan of Cyril Bailey's take on Epicurus but I feel sure you mean his scholarship more than his personal impression. I am curious about how Krokiewicz fits in that regard in terms of his ultimate assessment of Epicurus. Do you find him to be a supporter of Epicurus' ethics and general worldview who looks for reasonable constructs where the texts are unclear (sort of like DeWitt), or more scholastically neutral?

[Cassius](#) Yes, by comparing Adam Krokiewicz to Cyril Bailey I meant similarity of their scholarship.

My impression is that Adam Krokiewicz personally valued Epicurus and his philosophy. It looks to me as Krokiewicz always tried to do Epicurus justice and presented his philosophy as a consistent system. That said, Krokiewicz was a full-blooded scholar and it shows especially in his 1929 book. It's an academic treatise which can be difficult to read sometimes. His 1960 book, however, is written with broader public in mind and definitely more accessible.

I cannot compare Krokiewicz to DeWitt as I've never read the latter. I know his work is highly valued here and it's on my reading list but for now I can't say much more.

Post by “Cassius” of May 10, 2023 at 12:59 PM

As to Krokiewicz compared to Bailey, I made a collection of comments from Cyril Bailey I find irritating here:

[The “Yea-Sayers” and the “Nay-Sayers” - NewEpicurean](#)

Just for one example (so as not to derail the thread too far,) here is the kind of comment I can't see someone like DeWitt, or anyone firmly convinced of the basics, making:

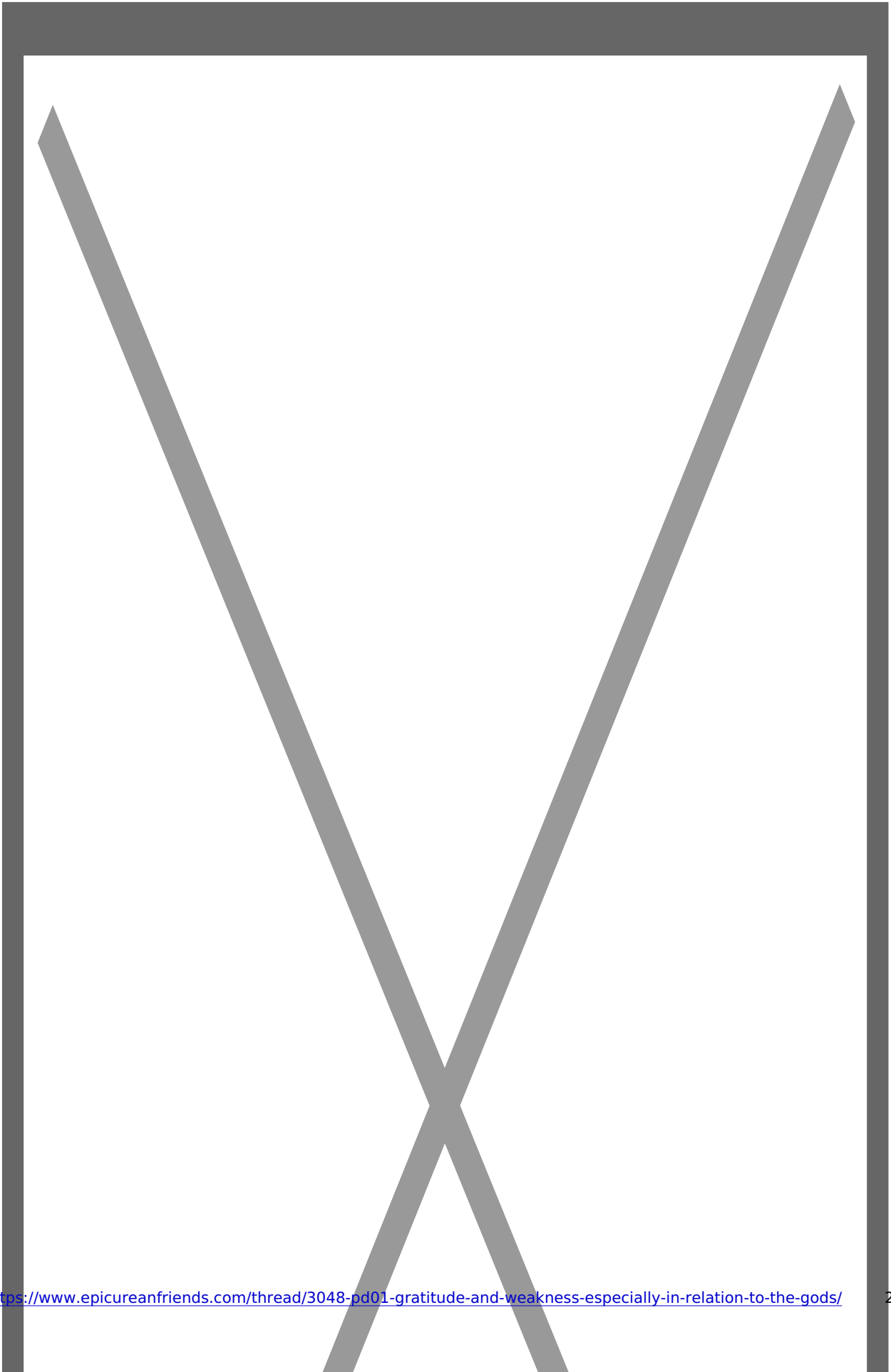
Cyrl Bailey: “The weakness of the Epicurean morality begins to show itself, as that of any form of egoistic hedonism necessarily must, as soon as the individual is set in relation with his fellow men. Nor does the picture become brighter if the virtues are left and certain other means are considered which the ‘wise men’ will pursue to secure ‘immunity’ from his fellows.” (The Greek Atomists and Epicurus, p 515)

So it is always interesting to me if we come across new names to add to the list of scholars who seem fundamentally in support of Epicurus without this kind of hedging that we have from Bailey.

Post by “Don” of May 10, 2023 at 1:01 PM

FYI

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[Adam Krokiewicz - Wikipedia, wolna encyklopedia](#)

pl.wikipedia.org

If someone wants to run that through Google translate

Post by “TauPhi” of May 10, 2023 at 4:08 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So it is always interesting to me if we come across new names to add to the list of scholars who seem fundamentally in support of Epicurus without this kind of hedging that we have from Bailey.

This is the last paragraph from the first chapter of 'Nauka Epikura' (1929 book) where Adam Krokiewicz describes Epicurus himself before going into Epicureanism in detail. This can give you better understanding of Krokiewicz assessment of Epicurus and his philosophy. I transcribed it, run through Google Translate and corrected the translation so it's as close to the original as possible.

Adam Krokiewicz, 'Nauka Epikura' (1929), page 62:

The teaching of Epicurus, intended for all humans and pointing the way to happiness in life, ultimately becomes a religious denomination, and its founder one of the religious geniuses. Because of the position of the gods as the natural ideals of human perfection and the position of humans as beings with natural duty to liberate their spirit and attain perfection during their lives, this religion may be called earthly in contrast to otherworldly mysticism. Because of the primacy of reason, the religion can be called intellectual as opposed to religions based on feelings, which violate reason. Epicurus did not recognize the piety of people who said: "I fear and worship all gods, I want to sacrifice to them all that I have" etc. (see Oxyrhynchus Papyri II, 215). He preferred them in truth to indifferent people, but he considered only the effort of rational thought to be the essential basis of piety. He called for the sacrifice of the most precious gift that human can make, namely the act of understanding, and to this call he remained faithful throughout his entire life. The teaching of Epicurus was as compact and uniform as the man himself. It deserves not only general, but also detailed understanding.

Post by “Cassius” of May 10, 2023 at 4:15 PM

Thank you TauPhi!

Here's that list of works from Google translate:

Scientific achievements [\[edit | edit code \]](#)

He announced about 80 scientific papers, including:

- *Errores etiones quaedam Lucretianae* (1916)
- *About Epicurean Happiness* (1923)
- *About the so-called epicurean induction* (1923)
- *Satirical moment in the comedies of Terentius and the genesis of Roman satire* (1925)
- *About the main parts of grammar and their mutual relationship* (1927)
- *Pirron from Ekkia and Timon from Fijunt* (1927)
- *The principle of isolation in Epikur's philosophy* (1927)
- *Epicurus science* (1929)
- *Coptic studies* (1947)
- *The origin of atomism* (1948)
- *Socrates* (1958)
- *Homer's morality and Hesiod's ethics* (1959)
- *Democritus ethics and Aristip's hedonism* (1960)
- *Epicurus hedonism* (1961)
- *Greek skepticism: From Pirron to Karneades* (1964)
- *Greek skepticism: From Philo to Sextus* (1966)
- *Outline of Greek philosophy: From Tales to Plato* (1971)
- *Alyktoles, Pirron and Plotinos* (1974)

Based on [Democritus' atomism in Wikipedia \(2023.07.11\)](#)

Post by “Cassius” of May 10, 2023 at 4:17 PM

Thanks for the translation!!

As to this:

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

He called for the sacrifice of the most precious gift that human can make, namely the act of understanding, and to this call he remained faithful throughout his entire life.

"Called for the sacrifice of....?" Meaning more like dedication to?

Post by “TauPhi” of May 10, 2023 at 5:35 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Thank you TauPhi!

Here's that list of works from Google translate:

Unfortunately, most of these are not attainable. I tried to find Epicurus related works but beside the books I've mentioned (which are also out of print) I couldn't get my hands on any of these works.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Thanks for the translation!!

As to this:

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

He called for the sacrifice of the most precious gift that human can make, namely the act of understanding, and to this call he remained faithful throughout his entire life.

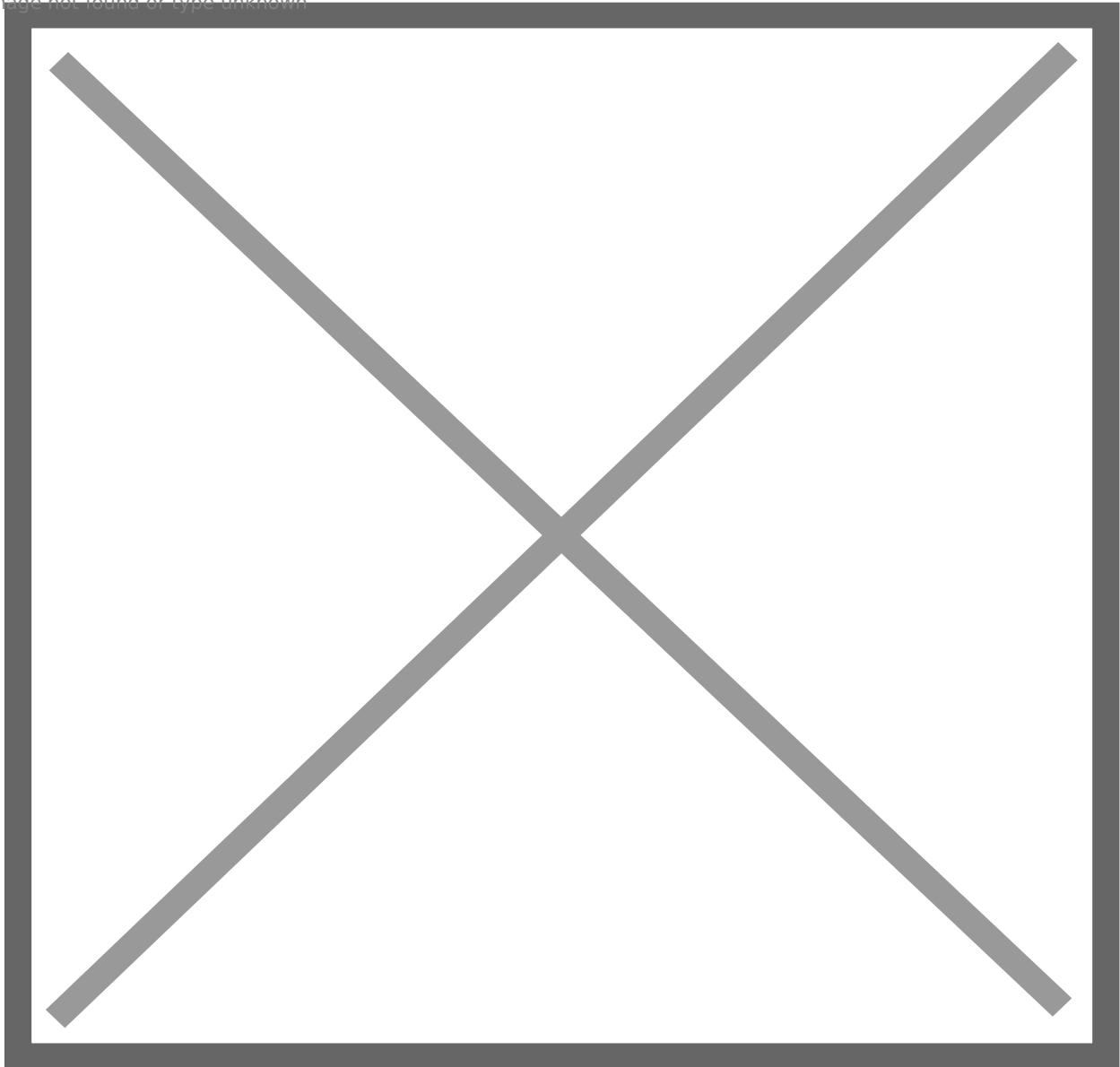
"Called for the sacrifice of....?" Meaning more like dedication to?

It's an opposition to the act of blindly sacrificing everything to gods out of fear (referring to Oxyrhynchus Papyri quote above). Sacrificing the act of understanding might not be the best wording (though Krokiewicz uses just that) but it's the act of giving everything one has intellectually to achieve fearless blessedness instead of fearful submission (at least that's how I understand it).

BTW, Adam Krokiewicz gives in this paragraph very interesting source. Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 215 is suspected to be potentially written by Epicurus himself. Here are some links if anyone cares to investigate further:

General info about Oxyrhynchus Papyri:

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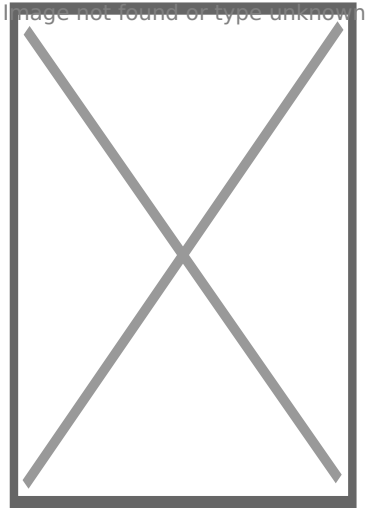
[Oxyrhynchus Papyri - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

Specific info about Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 215:

[Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 215 - Wikipedia](#)

And lastly, the source material and its translation:



[The Oxyrhynchus papyri : Grenfell, Bernard P : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

xii, 358 pages, plates : 27 cm
archive.org

Post by “Don” of May 10, 2023 at 5:54 PM

[Google Scholar](#)

For your convenience, a Google scholar search for Adam Krokiewicz

Post by “Don” of May 12, 2023 at 6:06 AM

To bring this back to [Eikadistes](#) 's original question, I wanted to look again at that word translated as "affected"

[Quote from Don](#)

ὥστε οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται:

so that it is not affected by anger or gratitude (Saint-Andre)

ὥστε with the indicative, to express the actual result with emphasis.

συνέχεται (3rd person singular middle/passive indicative < συνέχομαι can mean (as far as I can tell, anyone please correct me!) "afflicted with" but other connotations are impelled or disturbed, constrained by, trapped.

So, if ὥστε introduces a "result" of that which is blessed/incorruptible not causing trouble to itself or others... Wait, that sounds an awful lot like "neither harm nor be harmed." Hmm... Not the same words as [PD31](#), but similar sentiment?

We'll look at συνέχομαι in a second, but I find it interesting that the negation is on the nouns and not the verb: It's not "not affected by" it's "neither anger nor gratitude" affects them (singular them btw).

συνέχομαι is the passive/middle form of συνέχω.

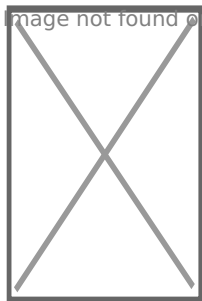
[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, Σ ζ, , συνευτροφέω , συνέχω](#)

So one of the passive connotations is "to be constrained oneself, distressed, afflicted, and, generally, to be affected by anything whether in mind or body." I can see this describing [Joshua](#)'s suggested interpretation. It wouldn't preclude the god from being itself angry or grateful (for variation in its pleasure) but it's not affected or constrained by the anger or gratitude of others, including humans. Which could serve as a model for human behavior. Don't be constrained by the anger or gratitude of others but pay attention to your own anger and gratitude. Philodemus talks about natural anger and other kinds of anger. The god could feel natural anger, but isn't affected by the empty anger of others?

[Real Harm, not Slight: the Prerequisites for "Natural Anger" in Philodemus' On Anger and their Influence on Vergil | Society for Classical Studies](#)

[Philodemus and the Peripatetics on the Role of Anger in the Virtuous Life | Society for Classical Studies](#)

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[Anger and the Desire for Revenge](#)

Abstract. This chapter examines Philodemus' diatribe On Anger, a principal piece of On the Passions and an important contribution to the philosophical literature
academic.oup.com

Post by “Don” of May 12, 2023 at 8:37 AM

Additional thought on this: The word μακάριος "blessed" is regularly used to describe both the life of the god and the life of a human in Epicurean texts, so those lives have to share some similarities. The big difference, as I see it, is the "incorruptibility" of the gods. The gods don't fall from their completely blissful state... Ever. But this does have a complement in human life. Diogenes Laertius says that "once the sage has become wise, they will no longer fall back into ignorance."

That incorruptible is...

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, Α α, , ἀφές-ημα , ἄφθαρ-τος](#)

uncorrupted, undecaying

Romans 1.23 includes the word referring to "the glory of the incorruptible God."

I Corinthians 15:52 uses it for "the dead will be raised incorruptible."

I find the description of the sage and the god intriguing. Not identical but complementary? Parallel?

Post by “Cassius” of May 12, 2023 at 2:36 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Diogenes Laertius says that "once the sage has become wise, they will no longer fall back into ignorance."

Agreed that is a parallel, but I would also say that that one probably calls for some explanations as it applies to humans, because in the absence of fate and given the presence of the swerve / free will, you would think that it would be hard to guarantee that every decision is wise.

Possibly means something about the wise man won't "intentionally" fall back into error? But even then, this statement has kind of a Stoic/Platonic ring to it, and I would probably add it into a list of statements by Diogenes Laertius that need to be scrutinized before accepting at the face value at which it's usually translated(?)

Post by “Don” of May 12, 2023 at 3:26 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

you would think that it would be hard to guarantee that every decision is wise.

I've taken that, in part, as once you pull up your empty ideas about death, fate, etc., you won't fall back into error.

Post by “Cassius” of May 12, 2023 at 4:36 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I've taken that, in part, as once you pull up your empty ideas about death, fate, etc., you won't fall back into error.

Yep. Whenever I think about things like that, however, I think of the "once saved, always saved" issues in Christianity, and I really can't see Epicurus himself (for example) claiming to never make a mistake. But certainly in those key areas you mention you would think that such errors would be very unlikely.

Post by “Don” of May 12, 2023 at 5:26 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"once saved, always saved" issues in Christianity



I have my doubts. It didn't seem to take with me.

Post by “Little Rocker” of May 12, 2023 at 5:48 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"once saved, always saved" issues in Christianity



I have my doubts. It didn't seem to take with me.

Ha! I have a strong aversion to this and some other related doctrines, but I admit that my mother believing it is probably why she doesn't seem to manifestly worry for my soul. Gotta get in early with the kids before they learn any different, I suppose.

Post by “Don” of May 13, 2023 at 6:58 AM

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

Gotta get in early with the kids before they learn any different, I suppose.

Μήτε νέος...μήτε γέρων...

"Neither must one who is young delay in loving and pursuing wisdom; nor should one who is old grow weary of loving and pursuing wisdom; because it is neither out of season nor untimely for the health of the psychē." 😊

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 13, 2023 at 9:27 AM

I'm thinking of approaching this from a different angle.

Can we disprove the following assertion?

The gods are grateful to Nature, for, without the eternal atoms, they would not enjoy pleasant lives.

Post by “Cassius” of May 13, 2023 at 10:22 AM

[Quote from Nate](#)

The gods are grateful to Nature, for, without the eternal atoms, they would not enjoy pleasant lives.

Great question. On the face of it I would think that that meaning of grateful *would* apply to the gods. If the gods take pleasure in their own existence and circumstances - and I think that would be true - isn't that Nature?

Maybe we are in another one of those many definition searches.

Post by “Cassius” of May 14, 2023 at 4:31 PM

I want to add a comment/question that occurs to me because of the podcast that we recorded today:

I think most of us would agree that it is healthy functioning for the human body to feel pain when it is exposed to something painful.

So the question is: Should we view the [Epicurean gods](#) (real OR ideal, either way), as being painless because they are *incapable* of feeling pain, or because they have so arranged their affairs and circumstances that they are never exposed to anything that is painful?

I ask because this might have a relationship to the original question of the gods feeling gratitude. Are they capable of feeling gratitude but do not because they have nothing outside themselves to be grateful for? Are they not grateful for their companionship with their companion gods?

I am thinking the answer would be that the gods are capable of feeling pain, but do not because they have so arranged their affairs so as never to be exposed to it, and in that way of looking at things they would serve as a model for we as humans to also in our own ways arrange our affairs.

But again the usefulness of this at the extreme may be more of a logic game than anything else. It seems obvious that we all, at whatever stage of development, wish to arrange our affairs so as to have no need to experience unnecessary or "un-worthy" pain.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 14, 2023 at 7:27 PM

This brings to mind pleasure ethics v duty ethics: if you consider it to be your duty to do a particular thing then you're likely to pursue it regardless of the pain involved. Compare this to pleasure ethics, where minimizing pain is a concern: you may achieve the same thing, but often much more pleasurably for all involved. Or you may choose to flee from the particular thing if you judge it to be a corrosive desire.

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 14, 2023 at 8:41 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

the gods are capable of feeling pain, but do not because they have so arranged their affairs so as never to be exposed to it, and in that way of looking at things they would serve as a model for we as humans to also in our own ways arrange our affairs.

This is what makes me envision the [Epicurean gods](#) as animals that have undergone countless iterations of self-improvement. I imagine the gods as citizens of an endless universe (a universe without a cosmic government), citizens who have perfected their ability to perpetually, and self-sufficiently maintain a stable, bio-chemical equilibrium so that the consistency of their lifestyle is incapable of being disrupted (including the disruption of death).

Post by “Martin” of May 15, 2023 at 10:41 AM

I posted translated quotes from the reference in Comment #35 at:

[Quotes from Karl Krohn's dissertation "Der Epikureer Hermarchos" - Hermarchus - Epicureanfriends.com](#)

Post by “Don” of May 16, 2023 at 8:32 AM

I just realized my post on another thread directly addresses this threads topic:

Post

RE: Quotes from Karl Krohn's dissertation "Der Epikureer Hermarchos"

The next citation is to Philodemus *On Anger*, pherc. 182, col. 43, lines 16-23:

<https://papyri.info/dclp/62390>

..., ὥστε καὶ τοῦτον

ἀσθενῆ ποιεῖν, οὐ παρενο-

χλήσει, καθάπερ ἐν[ί]οις, οἱ

πάνδεινον ἡγήσαντο, ταῖς

20 Κυρίαῖς Δόξαις ἀντιγρά-

φοντες, εἰ τετόλμηκέ τις

ἐν ἀσθενείαι λέγειν ὀργὴν

καὶ χάριτα καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοι-

οὔτον,...

epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/3741/



Don

May 16, 2023 at 7:50 AM

From Philodemus *On Anger*.