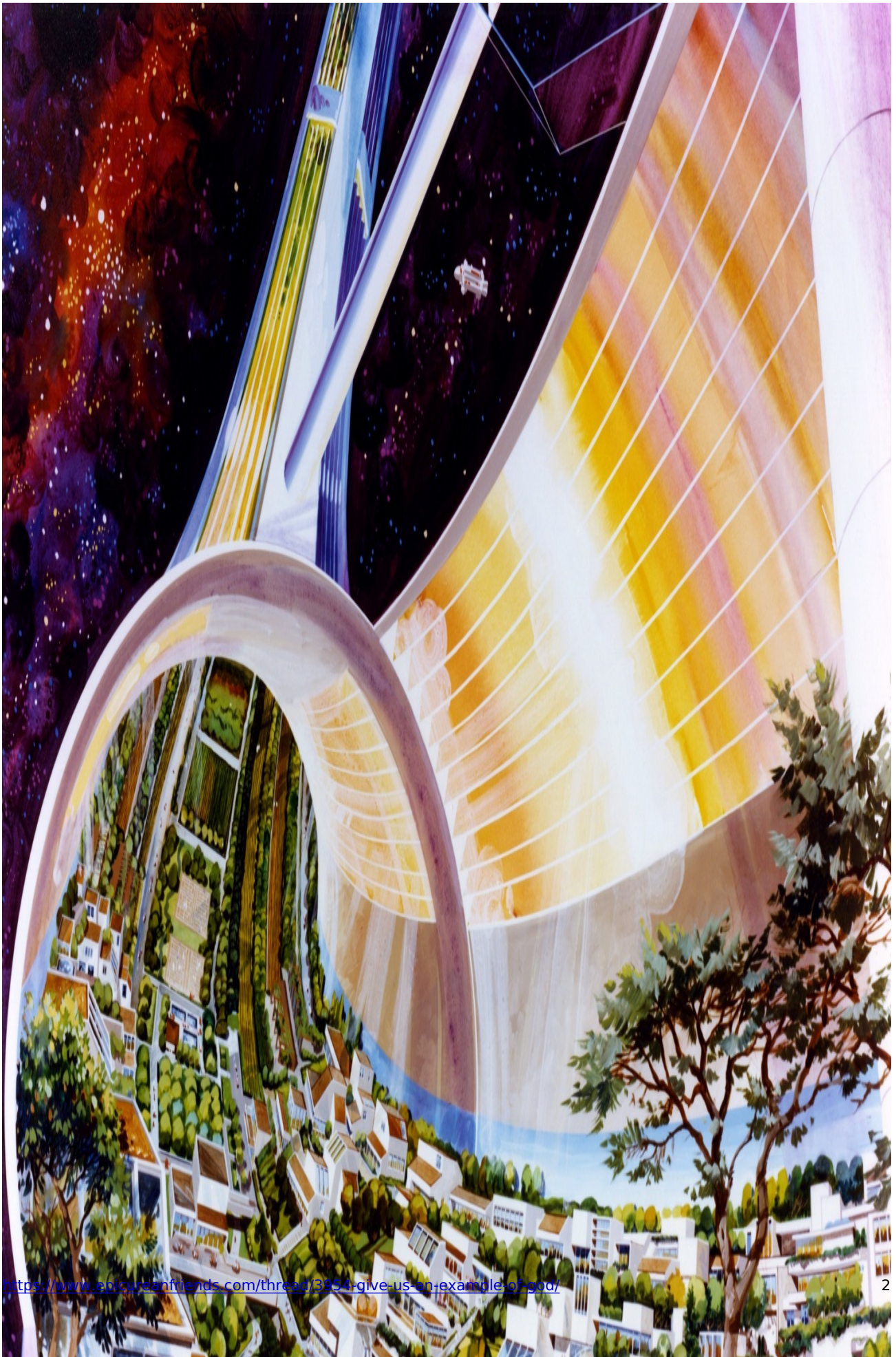


Give Us an Example of God!

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 7, 2024 at 7:29 PM

How do you anticipate the gods that are compatible with Epicurean theology?

- I *personally* imagine a sort of transhumanist depiction of the gods: **behold!** Human evolution has become re-directed through intentional engineering of bio-mechanical extensions that have cured disease and prevented aging. We live in space stations that are removed from solar radiation and rely upon self-reliant forms of power for energy. Our location in space is deep enough that the expansion of space will forever thicken the walls of our void, and we have everything we need in the closed environment we have created for ourselves as a community of divine friends.



- I also think that "DMT Machine Elves" are compatible candidates for Epicurean deities. I'm not going to spend too much time fleshing out that suggestion ... look it up if you aren't familiar ... just dropping the seed for future reference (I may never revisit).

(Note: constructive criticism and additions to either are invited)

What are your ideas? What is *God*? (and/or, what is an example of a god or goddess?)

Post by “Cassius” of July 7, 2024 at 9:57 PM

Given my own personal background, I tend to imagine gods looking like their appearance in Greek or Roman statues, perhaps updated to fit the science fiction depictions of superior beings that I've also been exposed to over the years. Various "Star Trek" episodes tend to come to mind in my case, particularly "[Errand of Mercy](#)" which seems almost as if it was written to address this question. In that episode the god-like examples were portrayed as old men, however, and I don't necessarily see the "old" part as appropriate. ([This picture](#) will refresh the memory of those who have seen it.)

To keep it consistent with the views that the Epicureans talked about, I would see a group of beings like that living with absolutely no burdensome work to perform, but still active in an Olympus-like environment, dealing with each other absolutely happily and with no conflicts, and never growing older or subject to disease or death.

I agree with Twentier's first post that as a practical matter it would take a path of technological progression to reach that stage, and that most of the way along that path there would be "work" involved to maintain the machinery to keep the environment safe. And if there is an indeed an issue that the gods are deathless but have not been eternally immortal, then there would be some kind of activity that they are involved in which would maintain them in their state of happiness and security, even though they would not consider that maintenance to be "work."

But in imagining gods of any appearance whatsoever, the core requirement is to see them as totally blessed and imperishable so that they are in no way interested in our human activities, so it's hard to imagine what kind of activities they would find most fruitful to them. So long as that core requirement is maintained, I would expect that we're right in the middle of one of those exercises where "multiple possibilities" have to be entertained, meaning that we have to be satisfied thinking of options but not choosing only one as the only possible godlike way to

spend your time. It's easy to understand the point that each person or being is going to have their own history of exposures to different people and depictions and that they will develop their own mental pictures of such beings.

The difference in mental depictions however does not mean that real beings that fit the general descriptions don't actually exist. I have in my mind right now a picture of an average Englishman or average German or average Russian, and just because my mental depictions don't exactly match what I would see if I actually went to England or Germany or Russia, that discrepancy does not mean that Englishmen and Germans and Russians don't actually exist.

The exercise involved in thinking about how such an existence might operate is probably the most beneficial aspect of the exercise, as a means of seeing how we might incrementally adjust our own experience to come as close to that "superior" way of life as we possibly can. It's a way of visually thinking about the question: "How might I reorganize my life to live better given my own circumstances."

Post by "Julia" of July 8, 2024 at 2:32 PM

When talking about the gods, I think we really need to stop conflating oneself with one's body.

Because the gods aren't troubled, I think they would inhabit machines which can maintain themselves, maintain each other, and, if ever needed, replicate somehow. Such a machine can be biological, like human bodies, but it can also be a fancy robot housing a quantum computer, and that fancy robot could actually be a space ship, travelling to harvest raw materials and energy, so it can keep running and renewing itself perpetually.

The god, then, would not be the space ship, would not be the robot, or the animal body. The god would be *in* the space ship, *in* the robot, *in* the animal. It would be the software that runs inside of it, the consciousness in its mind, merely inhabiting it, possessing it for a while, for fun, for pleasure and to sustain its existence. Just like software exists and lives in, but remains different from a computer. Just like I can inhabit and possess a costume to wear to a costume party, and will make certain experiences because of that costume. Experiences which I wouldn't make without wearing it, and which would be different if my costume was different – and which would have above-average likelihood to be similar if someone else wore the same costume.

To the gods, their corporeal existence is like fashion and style are to us. We get into trouble if we don't wear anything, but as long as we wear something, we can basically be whoever we want – including the same over and over, including someone new every day.

So my guess is the gods are incorporeal entities ("software") inhabiting fancy bio-mechanical space ships ("hardware"), which repair and replicate themselves. I would need to think about whether they are conscious, whether they are introspective, whether they are self-aware - I'm not sure if that is actually pleasing.

Why wouldn't they be sophisticated instincts inside mechanical jellyfish happily shape-shifting through space - no introspection, no sense of self as we know it?

PS: After all, simpler animals like reptiles can be happy and unhappy, feel pleasure and pain - but they're not self-aware or introspective, they're not equipped with a consciousness the way we have one. They're also not social animals. Why would the gods be different from a happy reptile in these regards?

Post by "Bryan" of July 9, 2024 at 3:20 PM

[Quote from Julia](#)

incorporeal entities ("software") inhabiting fancy bio-mechanical space ships ("hardware"), which repair

Although the only incorporeal entity is the void, which cannot think or do anything at all. Nothing incorporeal can act or be acted upon.

Certainly, the environment supporting gods is naturally occurring between the kosmoi by automatic infinite processes of nature (just as the environment supporting waterfalls is naturally occurring on Earth by automatic finite processes of nature).

Great topic!

Post by "Eikadistes" of July 9, 2024 at 6:16 PM

How about compatibility with other traditions' conceptions of God?

I think mostly not:

- Religions that recognize the existence of a cosmic architect (and/or divine providence)
 - Incompatible with **Abrahamic** theology: *Judaism, Christianity, Islam*, etc.
 - Incompatible with **Vedic** theology: *Krishnaism, Shaivism, Smartism, Vaishnavism*, etc.
 - Incompatible with **Indigenous** theology: *Santería, Shinto, Tengrism, Voodoo*, etc.
- Philosophies that promote an eternal soul, immaterial consciousness, or universal mind
 - Incompatible with *Idealism, Panpsychicism, Subjectivism, and Transcendentalism*
 - Incompatible with *Advaita, Platonism, Shaktism, Stoicism, Vajrayāna, and Yogācāra*
 - Incompatible with Cartesian Dualism, *Yoga, Samkhya, Dvaita Vedanta, Sikhism, and Jainism*
 - Incompatible with the Āstika schools of *Mīmāṃsā, Nyaya, and Vaisheshika*
- Traditions that fail to provide any assurance of certainty regarding nature and reality
 - Incompatible with *Pyrrhonism, Skepticism*, and the *Nāstika* traditions of *Ājīvika* and *Ajñāna*
 - Incompatible with the *early Buddhism, Mādhyamaka*, and the Socratic Method
- *Similar* to *Charvaka* and *Yangism* in their hedonist ethics and naturalistic physics. But they are atheistic and non-theistic traditions, so they reject any images of God as having validity.
- *Somewhat* compatible *Taoism* in terms of spiritual naturalism, and, here, I think we find a mirror in that Taoist deities (in branches that recognize deities) are subject to the supreme nature of the Tao and not rulers of it, just as the Epicurean deities are subject to the forces of nature.

Just some thoughts...

Post by “Julia” of July 9, 2024 at 6:56 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

Certainly, the environment supporting gods is naturally occurring between the kosmoi by automatic infinite processes of nature

I like that idea (if you mean what I think you do 😊), but hadn't thought of it that way – what is the Epicurean position on these kosmoi? It seems easy to bring this to congruence with my experiences of life and death, which is quite comforting to me 😊

(Even though I know that everything is atoms and void, and that therefore all my experiences must have just been unusual neuronal activity, there is a big, deep, and profound felt sense of importance and truth attached to the experiences, such that I find it hard to dismiss them. I have always stuck with the thought that what I experienced where, in fact, some kind of other dimensions or realms, simply because that brought me comfort *and* did me no harm, as I didn't let it affect my judgement negatively (I did let it affect my judgement only in reality-tested, hedonically-sensible ways, via insights, through lessons learnt).)

Tangent: Incorporeal entities vs patterns, and proper vocabulary for them

[Quote from Bryan](#)

Although the only incorporeal entity is the void, which cannot think or do anything at all. Nothing incorporeal can act or be acted upon.

Well 😊 that is technically correct (which means I was technically wrong), but... 🤔

Here's a more verbose elaboration of what I meant to say, and I realise what I say doesn't *seem* to align cleanly with Epicurean philosophy, but I do think that it actually *does* align. Maybe I'm just missing some vocabulary to express myself well in this regard? If so, please do teach me some words! 😊

What I meant with "incorporeal entity", et cetera:

Is mathematics real? No, because nobody can touch it, measure it, sense it. It has no weight, no dimensions, doesn't age or swerve. Does that mean it is void? No, because we can use it, and so it has to be *something*. The same could be said about knowledge itself, language itself, about all concepts. What are concepts in Epicurean philosophy? Patterns of atoms? But then, what's the difference between a pattern and an incorporeal entity? Aren't both the same thing?

Software is a pattern that always has to exist in one or the other corporeal representation (various vastly different ways to code the same pattern, different ways to represent it are possible, from punch cards to rote memorisation of source code to flash drives). But the fact that it depends on having a corporeal representation doesn't make *the pattern itself* corporeal. I'm not quite sure how to describe that. (And I do realise that what I've just said doesn't quite fit into Epicurean philosophy...?)

The various "incarnations" (for lack of a better word) of a piece of software can act and be acted upon, but even if they were destroyed (overwritten, deleted), they could also be restored perfectly (reinstalled, restored from backup, reinfected) - and the places from which they were restored could differ, such that tape could be used to restore a hard disk, and furthermore the

source of that restoration could even be "dead" (for lack of a better word), because it was merely a backup drive, not attached to any hardware able to execute it (bring it to life) - much like a virus is considered dead, because it has no own metabolism, but it still carries the DNA and everything else needed to infect a new host cell, where it will be brought to life and replicate itself.

The same processes which exist with software/hardware today could, theoretically, exist in nature, if one brain could copy (part of) its content into another brain through some kind of neural link (just like one human can program another (largely through language and physical acts)), and even more so should be possible with (quantum) computers (which could reside inside fancy space-dwelling robots). The gods could then be software which moves itself around - always needing to exist in one physical form or another, one arrangement of atoms or another, *but not bound to any one of them, without becoming any one of them*, just like a virus can infect many host cells without becoming the host cell, just like software can run on many different computers, just like ideas can spread from one human mind to another...?

Post by "Root304" of July 9, 2024 at 7:04 PM

I usually take the approach that it wouldn't take imagining things exceedingly different or extraordinary to get to Epicurean Godhood. If some lower class folks in the Epicurean hayday could get much from the philosophy then blessedness must not be too far out of grasp for me living in the 21st century American context. I also read a lot of more left-wing anthropology, so I usually imagine Gods as some sort of subsistence farming or hunter gathering community; or a culture that reconstitutes their society with the seasons or generationally to continue to live blessedly and in balance with the psychic impulses of the human animal to that end. I think about this more scaled-down vision as a personal and achievable goal I am working towards i.e. living in a tighter-knit community with friends and not just the nuclear family. Yang Zhu had a particular valorization of the "the ancients" in his context from my limited study of his system, so this look to the past fits with that tradition.

I'm not really too interested in futurism as I find tech integration and most transhuman concepts beyond healing diseases to be pretty disconcerting. I do like a good blanket Star Trek-like vision for futurity if I am considering it, though I am not that familiar or interested in the details of that franchises' lore.

I think Epicurean philosophy applies to humans and other similar enough biological entities no matter where in technological progression they find themselves in. Perhaps it's good practice to contemplate Epicurean Godhood at every stage of development we can imagine: the Blessed Epicurean ancients (and look to those who still live close to that presently) and the Epicurean

future, in order to better reason to how we can live an Epicurean present which is accelerating technologically. The theology could be a way to understand that blessedness comes in many varieties and is possible to nearly grasp in most contexts.

Post by “Julia” of July 9, 2024 at 7:31 PM

[Quote from Root304](#)

The theology could be a way to understand that blessedness comes in many varieties and is possible to nearly grasp in most contexts.

As much as I agree with the first half of that sentence, I don't see how blessedness "is possible to nearly grasp", shy of being a healthy heiress in a liberal country, rich enough to be free from worries (other than love) while still being poor enough to fly below the paparazzi radar. That would indeed be winning the lottery.

Tangent: Personal thoughts on Transhumanism

[Quote from Root304](#)

I find tech integration and most transhuman concepts beyond healing diseases to be pretty disconcerting.

I find them disconcerting, too – but at the same time, I also find them liberating. I wear glasses, know people with artificial sensory implants (for hearing, for sensing electro-magnetic fields, ...), artificial joints, vessels and valves, artificially enhanced attention, executive function and memory. One universal of advanced civilisations appears to be that people raised within them are taught to favour modifying their environment (instead of submitting to it), and as a person, I reside within a human, but I am not it, and as such, my body is as much my environment as the flat I use to shelter it, and the society I use to shelter that flat. What, then, is the difference between a tattoo and a picture on the wall? What, then, is the difference between air conditioning and an implant? Both should be fine if they bring me pleasure – the disconcerting aspect is the new and severe power dynamics that can (but don't need to) come with this development. Will natural humans be at a disadvantage to enhance ones? They already are, so that is obvious, and nothing new – those with resources always used them to establish and enshrine their own advantages. But will we be at the mercy of tech corporations? Probably, but not necessarily. So I choose to hope for the best and ignore it otherwise, because I can't change

the weather, politics, or the future (yet 😊).

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 9, 2024 at 7:48 PM

[Quote from Julia](#)

[Quote from Root304](#)

I find tech integration and most transhuman concepts beyond healing diseases to be pretty disconcerting.

I find them disconcerting, too - but at the same time, I also find them liberating. I wear glasses, know people with artificial sensory implants (for hearing, for sensing electromagnetic fields, ...), artificial joints, vessels and valves, artificially enhanced attention, executive function and memory.

For sure, from my perspective, I imagine the driving force behind any sort of advanced, technological integration should be the curing of disease and the elimination of aging, not just directionless experimenting (usually unethical) for the sake of experimenting.

[Quote from Twentier](#)

How do you anticipate the gods that are compatible with Epicurean theology?

- bio-mechanical extensions that have cured disease and prevented aging.

As Philodemus argues in *On Death*: "And therefore the greatest good has been grasped by the person who has become wise and lived through a certain amount of time. Once his journey has achieved balance and consistency, **it would be fitting to prolong it for an unlimited time, if such were possible**; but should his life be limited, this will not be the deprivation of what has already been, but [sc. merely] a prevention of its continued presence."

Post by “Root304” of July 9, 2024 at 8:02 PM

[Julia](#)

Thanks so much for the thoughtful reply!

While I recognize that I have geographic, ethnic and gender advantages in my favor, I also have fortunately known, congregated and am among many poor and frugal folk who understand the true value of a friend. You can make so much happen in terms of material and moral enrichment even with meager means if you indeed hold your friends close and your enemies afar. Living one's life receiving and repaying wiselike, in excess and in kind is a most gratifying way to live under the present conditions.

[Quote from Julia](#)

and as a person, I reside within a human, but I am not it, and as such, my body is as much my environment as the flat I use to shelter it, and the society I use to shelter that flat.

I suppose in studying Epicureanism's doctrine of the Soul, I came to see myself as the totality of my body, and the mind as just another piece of it that is important, but I am more expansive than that. Even though some of my body's functions are unconscious does not mean they aren't me, or that I can't apprehend it's thoughts with my mind. The "immortality" of Epicurean friendship surely extends to who and what I am in the world as I appear to others as well. My Father, who has past, was to me not his mind but the way he was received to me through the senses and emotions; smells, feelings, touch, voice, etc. The Epicurean soul must surely include the biochemical, mental and bodily memories between people as well.

As for immortality being a part of Epicurean Theology, I honestly part ways with Philodemus there. Living for exceedingly long times is another fear of mine.

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 9, 2024 at 8:04 PM

This brings up another point: various Epicureans have presented the argument that a Creator cannot be a god because a Creator must have been *bored*, or *lonely*, or *in need of other beings* prior to creation; such a state is inconsistent with blessedness. That seems to suggest that the Christian deity does not meet the qualifications for being a true god because of its primordial boredom.

Like I said, I tend to think of gods as being advanced animals, especially because it illustrates the ethics of self-improvement, *however*, I'm not sure that position is consistent with Epicurean theology. If a Creator cannot be a god because it was once needy, can a quasi-animal be a god if it was once a normal animal, subject to the specter of disease and death? God should *always*

have been blessed.

I cannot imagine a being that has *always* been blessed, unless, through a pure act of chance, yet a chance so specific and rare that a quasi-animal-being with a quasi-biology forms (like the rarity of dumping a huge bag of Scrabble pieces and it creating the entirety of the *Lord of the Rings*), and this moment of "emaculate conception" (*so to speak...*) can be described as a sort of [infinity -1], where the blessed quasi-animal formed before any particular time you can apprehend in time. Yet for that being to breathe quasi-air, have functioning quasi-blood, and to have friends seems to require other conditions that make the "emaculate conception" possibility too unlikely to entertain.

That creates quite a conundrum. How can a blessed quasi-animal ***always*** have existed?

Or can it not? (And I might be mis-reading the intent of the anti-Creator arguments)

Post by "Eikadistes" of July 9, 2024 at 8:25 PM

The *Society of Friends of Epicurus* accepts a "third interpretation" of Epicurean theology, in addition to the alleged (1) *Idealist* and (2) *Realist* camps ... *which I'll just gloss over for the sake of not bogging us down into a partisan philosophical debate* 😊 . This third camp is a (3) Non-Theistic interpretation, primarily represented by those of us who are, to be frank, just sort of turned-off by the entire idea of "God" as it is overwhelmingly presented throughout numerous parts of our culture.

Personally, I feel this, but I'm not sure its the best way to express Epicurus' thoughts on piety.



Post by “Cassius” of July 9, 2024 at 8:29 PM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

This brings up another point: various Epicureans have presented the argument that a Creator cannot be a god because a Creator must have been bored, or lonely, or in need of other beings prior to creation; such a state is inconsistent with blessedness.

Which is why I would expect Epicurus to have emphasized life in the universe along a "spectrum" in which there will be lots of beings lots more advanced than us which *do* create their own "worlds" (but not from nothing), with the status of "god" being reserved for those that have in fact reached the point of wanting nothing that they do not already have.

[Quote from Twentier](#)

How can a blessed quasi-animal always have existed?

I tend to think that their answer there would have been that gods "as a kind" have always existed as a part of natural processes leading to that result, but that gods as individuals have

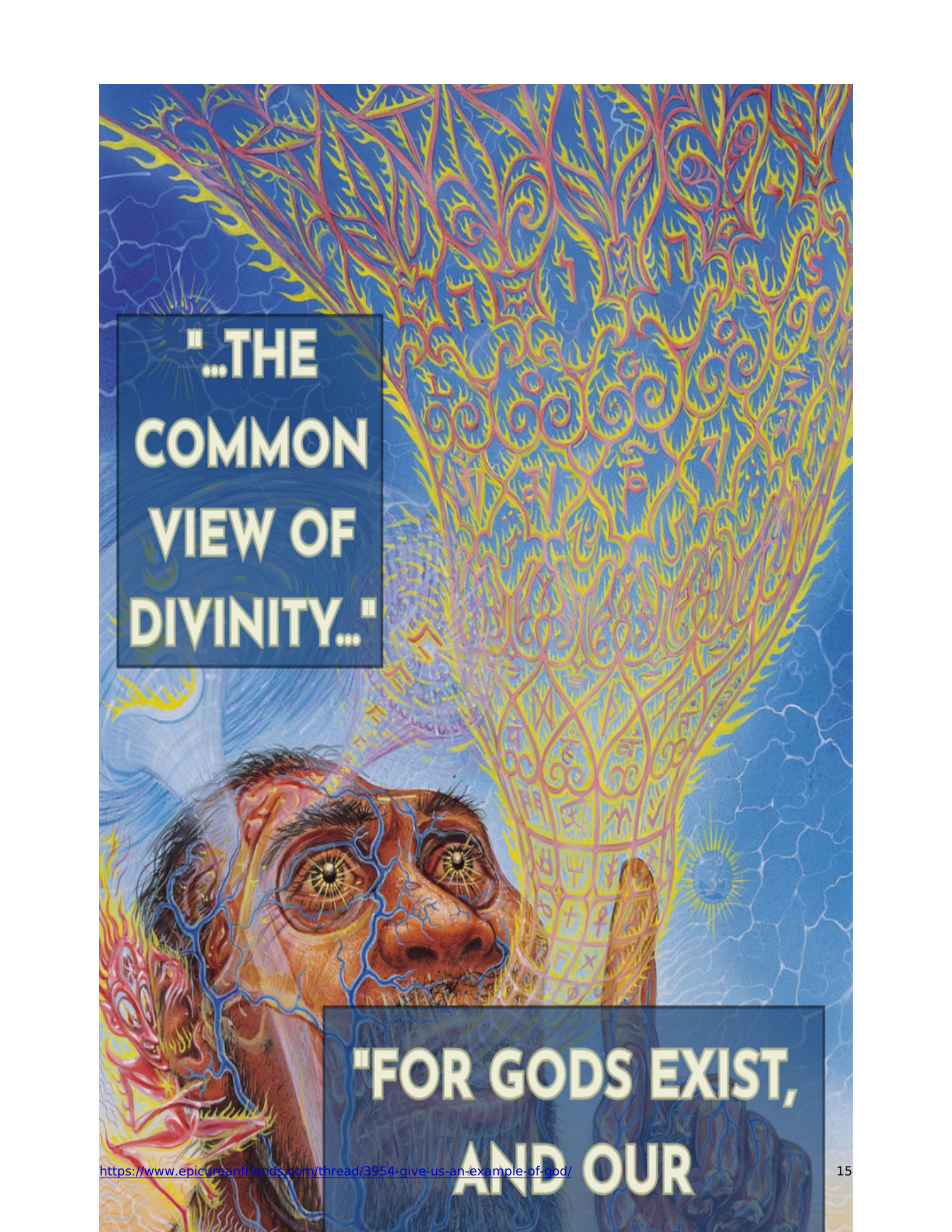
not existed forever, given that the only things that have existed without creation are matter and void. This leads down the road DeWitt mentions that the gods have to act to maintain their deathlessness. I suppose it's not inconceivable that individual gods might conclude after eons that variety really does not add to complete pleasure, and decide voluntarily to go out of existence. I wouldn't be surprised if the ancient Epicureans asked themselves that question, at the very least as part of the discussion about beings like us, who will surely die, and questioning *how much in fact* we necessarily lose by being mortal rather than deathless. Variety is in fact nice to us who haven't learned the lesson, but if we were to in fact experience for ourselves (through technology in the future) how it does not in fact make pleasure "more complete," then I am thinking that it would be conceivable to decide, once we were really sure that we had experienced "complete" pleasure, that nothing more is needed, and to get tired of the "more."

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 9, 2024 at 8:33 PM

Hermakchos, Philodemos, and Lucretius tease us with their speculations about the characteristics of the gods, and therein set a precedent among Epicureans to wonder about their form...

I think Demetrios of Lakon wrote a book entitled *On the Form of the Gods* (is that right?)

Even so, I wonder if the best way to think of the gods is primarily as a *pure mental impression*, (regardless of the corresponding *atomoï* that left said *impressions*.) Excuse some of the idealistic implications of the follow image by Alex Grey, but I feel like this brings together a few elements that I think are key to [Epicurean gods](#): **mental experiences**, usually in dream-states (...drug-induced?), of divine quasi-humans, and **the assigning of names** to the category of the divine quasi-humans.



**"...THE
COMMON
VIEW OF
DIVINITY..."**

**"FOR GODS EXIST,
AND OUR**

Just some more food for thought. Here's (above) an image that depicts (to me) the gods primarily as mental concepts, rather than as physical object to which mental concepts corresponds.

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 9, 2024 at 8:34 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

[Quote from Twentier](#)

How can a blessed quasi-animal always have existed?

I tend to think that their answer there would have been that gods "as a kind" have always existed as a part of natural processes leading to that result, but that gods as individuals have not existed forever

This is a great point! I hadn't considered this.

We need to check the original language.

Post by “Julia” of July 9, 2024 at 9:00 PM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

not just directionless experimenting (usually unethical) for the sake of experimenting.

I think they're seeking to enhance themselves (artificial senses, nootropics, ...), in the same way that I'm using tools (car, knife, ...) - so I don't see it as directionless, I don't see it as experimenting for the sake of experimenting, and I don't think it can be unethical what one does to one's own body (unless whatever that is inevitably causes a considerable burden to others; such as a parent burdening a child by being an addict or by wilfully disabling their body). My basic rule would be: My body, my choice.

However, I think they're (almost always) misguided in their longing for such enhancements, because they seem to be (almost always) driven by limitless desires (vain & empty) or their

underlying desire is natural-but-unnecessary and they got the risks wrong, skewing the results of their hedonic calculation (which, to me, doesn't make it unethical, it just makes it stupid 😊).

[Quote from Twentier](#)

- Similar to Charvaka and Yangism in their hedonist ethics and naturalistic physics. But they are atheistic and non-theistic traditions, so they reject any images of God as having validity.

Thank you for mentioning those! I found it interesting to read a short summary about them. To me, it is nice to know Epicurean philosophy isn't entirely a one-off after all.

[Quote from Root304](#)

I also have fortunately known, congregated and am among many poor and frugal folk who understand the true value of a friend. You can make so much happen in terms of material and moral enrichment even with meager means if you indeed hold your friends close and your enemies afar. Living one's life receiving and repaying wiselike, in excess and in kind is a most gratifying way to live under the present conditions.

Reading that, I couldn't help but instinctively reject the notion of friends, which then told me I have some more healing to do – and when I thought I have some more healing to do, I rejected that in turn, as an expression of assimilationism into the social construct of normalcy, as an internalised norm contrary to my own ways of being. It shall be interesting to see where I land on that subject a decade or so down the road, when the experience of friendship might be safe, affordable and attainable.

[Quote from Root304](#)

The "immortality" of Epicurean friendship surely extends to who and what I am in the world as I appear to others as well. My Father, who has past, was to me not his mind but the way he was received to me through the senses and emotions; smells, feelings, touch, voice, etc. The Epicurean soul must surely include the biochemical, mental and bodily memories between people as well.

To me, the members of family (who all have passed), are concepts, interaction models, "software", disembodied (which is probably both bizarre and unhealthy...). Either way, I don't perceive the world as physical as you do. To me, *experientially*, the world is just the medium in which patterns interact – the patterns being selves, conscious concepts, "brain software", or whatever you would want to call it. To me, this is the difference between a person (the entity inside a body) and a human (the animal). The soul, to me, is the mind *of the body*, as opposed to the mind which hosts the person. I suppose this distinction is hard to explain, let alone make

visceral, to anyone who hasn't seen or experienced a body alive and well, yet devoid of a person inside. It's...like an abandoned car with the engine running, like a house with the lights on when nobody's home. Most people then just sit and stare, others go through very basic motions cued in by their environment (eg they drink when presented with water, but their overall actions are utterly unplanned and directionless, like opening and closing doors for no apparent reason, taking objects then replacing them, just doing the habit-/instinct-based actions of whatever they find in their surroundings). Such a body, however, still has primitive feelings of active/tired, warm/cold, hunger/thirst, and pain/pleasure. Not sure if I explained that well...? 😊

Anyways, this is why some parts of the interaction patterns which to me mean my family are alive as long as I will be: I absorbed those aspects of them and continue to repeat them (in modified ways), which metaphorically is sort of like replicating an inherited DNA of behaviour.

[Quote from Twentier](#)

Here's (above) an image that depicts (to me) the gods

Off topic, just curious: Did ancient Epicureans use mind-altering substances (other than alcohol), as the painting suggests?

[Quote from Twentier](#)

the gods primarily as mental concepts, rather than as physical object to which mental concepts corresponds.

If the gods were merely a special type of concept they would not be subject to the laws of nature.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I suppose it's not inconceivable that individual gods might conclude after eons that variety really does not add to complete pleasure, and decide voluntarily to go out of existence.

That is why I cannot imagine the gods as self-aware and conscious, as [indicated above](#). If the gods are more like fancy jellyfish, like reptile minds, bundles of instinct, then they can be eternally happy without being bored by the passage of time or the constant repetition. The question, of course, is whether something that has no self-awareness and isn't conscious in the way we understand it can be "happy" to begin with, but I'd say that every self-regulating system has a state which is "pleasing" to the system because it is within all the tolerance and reference ranges for its operating conditions: not too warm, not too cold, not too hungry, ...

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 9, 2024 at 9:09 PM

[Quote from Julia](#)

[Quote from Twentier](#)

Here's (above) an image that depicts (to me) the gods

Off topic, just curious: Did ancient Epicureans use mind-altering substances (other than alcohol), as the painting suggests?

It's definitely on-topic, and it is primarily supported right now by (1) a total projection based on my anecdotal experiences as an atheist who ate mushrooms and had experienced what seemed so clearly to me to be *The Religious Experience* that is described in many traditions, and (2) a totally circumstantial supposition based on the fact that surrounding groups of non-Greek peoples were using psycho-active substances, such as the Scythians use of cannabis.

We know that Epicurus took part in the Dionysian and Eleusian mysteries, which most definitely involved wine, as you mentioned, but anything else, at this point, I think, is a stretch.

Still ... I'm stretching, because the [Epicurean gods](#) jive with my self-induced psychedelic experiences more than they are cohering to any one animalistic conception I've tried to formulate. I'm really open to image others like that reflect qualities of how they imagine the divine nature.

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 9, 2024 at 9:15 PM

[Julia](#) I found one! **Kykeon**. I'm re-posting this directly from Wikipedia's article on the Eleusinian Mysteries [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleusinia...ogenic_theories]

Quote

Entheogenic theories

Numerous scholars have proposed that the power of **the Eleusinian Mysteries came from the kykeon's functioning as an entheogen, or psychedelic agent.**^[9] The use of potions or philtres for magical or religious purposes was relatively common in Greece and the ancient world.^[80] The initiates, sensitized by their fast and prepared by

preceding ceremonies (see [set and setting](#)), may have been propelled by the effects of **a powerful psychoactive potion into revelatory mind states with profound spiritual and intellectual ramifications.**^[81] In opposition to this idea, skeptical scholars note the lack of any solid evidence and stress the collective rather than individual character of initiation into the Mysteries.^[82]

Many [psychoactive](#) agents have been proposed as the significant element of kykeon, though without consensus or conclusive evidence. These include **the ergot species *Claviceps paspali*** [\[fr\]](#),^[9] a [fungal parasite](#) of [paspalum](#), which contains the alkaloids [ergotamine](#), a precursor to [LSD](#), and [ergonovine](#).^{[81][83]} However, modern attempts to prepare a kykeon using ergot-parasitized barley have yielded inconclusive results, though **Alexander Shulgin and Ann Shulgin describe both ergonovine and LSA to be known to produce LSD-like effects.**

Discovery of fragments of [ergot](#) (fungi containing LSD-like psychedelic alkaloids) in a temple dedicated to the two Eleusinian Goddesses excavated at the Mas Castellar site ([Girona, Spain](#)) provided some legitimacy for this theory. Ergot fragments were found inside a vase and within the dental calculus of a 25-year-old man, providing evidence of ergot being consumed. This finding seems to support the hypothesis of ergot as an ingredient of the Eleusinian [kykeon](#).

[Psychoactive mushrooms](#) are another candidate. Scholars such as [Robert Graves](#) and [Terence McKenna](#), speculated that the mysteries were focused around a variety of [Psilocybe](#). Other [entheogenic](#) fungi, such as [Amanita muscaria](#), have also been suggested. A recent hypothesis suggests that the ancient Egyptians cultivated [Psilocybe cubensis](#) on barley and associated it with the deity [Osiris](#).

Another candidate for the psychoactive drug is an opioid derived from the [poppy](#). The cult of the goddess Demeter may have brought the poppy from Crete to Eleusis; it is certain that opium was produced in Crete.

Another theory is that the psychoactive agent in kykeon is DMT, which occurs in many wild plants of the Mediterranean, including [Phalaris](#) and/or [Acacia](#). To be active orally (like in [ayahuasca](#)) it must be combined with a [monoamine oxidase inhibitor](#) such as Syrian rue ([Peganum harmala](#)), which grows throughout the Mediterranean.

Alternatively, [J. Nigro Sansonese](#) (1994), using the [mythography](#) supplied by [Mylonas](#), hypothesizes that the Mysteries of Eleusis were a series of practical initiations into [trance](#) involving [proprioception](#) of the human nervous system induced by breath control (similar to [samayama](#) in yoga).^[92] Sansonese speculates that the *kisté*, a box holding sacred objects opened by the hierophant, is actually an esoteric reference to the initiate's [skull](#), within which is seen a sacred light and are heard sacred sounds, but only *after* instruction in trance practice. Similarly, the seed-filled chambers of a [pomegranate](#), a fruit associated with the founding of the cult, esoterically describe

proprioception of the initiate's [heart](#) during trance.

Display More

Post by “Julia” of July 9, 2024 at 9:19 PM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

the [Epicurean gods](#) jive with my self-induced psychedelic experiences more than they are cohering to any one animalistic conception I've tried to formulate.

I agree, because as mentioned...

[Quote from Julia](#)

It seems easy to bring this to congruence with my experiences of life and death, which is quite comforting to me 😊

...I find even the idea of entirely denying any and all not-physically-explainable experience to be quite displeasing, or rather...

[Quote from Julia](#)

Even though I know that everything is atoms and void, and that therefore all my experiences must have just been unusual neuronal activity, there is a big, deep, and profound felt sense of importance and truth attached to the experiences, such that I find it hard to dismiss them.

...that even though they are physically explainable, I find their subjective weight ought to be honoured adequately, instead of being brushed aside as a mere biochemical fluke...

...at the same time, however, that feels like a slippery slope into theism, and as such, I'm quite happy with the gods having a blast in the intermundia, and my brain merely having "tuned into that other dimension" for a little while (which, physically speaking, is delusional - I'm aware of that, but I like the idea anyhow).

[Quote from Twentier](#)

I found one! Kykeon.

Thank you! I'll have a look into that 😊

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 9, 2024 at 9:21 PM

Given that a potentially-psychedelic brew was ingested at the climax of a mystery cult, and it is written that he ***is found to have taken part in all the traditional festivals and sacrifices. [...] he says that he shared in all the festivals [...] and that while he was joining in celebrating the festival of the Choes [at Anthesteria] and the urban mysteries [Attic Dionysia] | and the other festivals at a meagre dinner...*** it would might be odd for him ***not*** to ingest kykeon.

If something like kykeon was ingested regularly, and kykeon can contain ergot, or potentially another psychoactive agent, then ... well, indeed, "knowledge of *the gods*" was "evident".

Post by “Bryan” of July 9, 2024 at 9:32 PM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

Demetrios of Lakon wrote a book entitled On the Form of the Gods (is that right?)

Yes, but of course just a little bit remains.

Post by “Julia” of July 9, 2024 at 9:45 PM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

Given that a potentially-psychedelic brew was ingested at the climax of a mystery cult, and it is written that he ***is found to have taken part in all the traditional festivals and sacrifices. [...] he says that he shared in all the festivals [...] and that while he was joining in celebrating the festival of the Choes [at Anthesteria] and the urban mysteries***

[Attic Dionysia] | and the other festivals at a meagre dinner..." it would might be odd for him not to ingest kykeon.

If something like kykeon was ingested regularly, and kykeon can contain ergot, or potentially another psychoactive agent, then ... well, indeed, "knowledge of the gods" was "evident".

I agree. As per Wikipedia, it seems quite certain that Kykeon contained ergot, which might make Epicurus' idea of the gods and the intermundia much more conceptual-spiritual (for lack of a better word) than physical - which does *not* make them any less real, because we can sense them...?

For those wondering: Ergot is a fungus growing on cereal grains, which produces a wide range of bio-active chemicals such as ergometrine (used as a drug after childbirth, still an essential in many parts of the world), but most notably for our discussion here would be ergine, which is LSD minus the diethyl group, which in turn is like magic mushrooms' psilocybin plus a mild amphetamine, which I'd guess to be very vaguely comparable to being stoned-out-of-one's-mind on cannabis while also having ingested enough caffeine to offset the tiredness/numbness/lethargy/... that would induce. (Oh my, the weird knowledge my sponge-and-sieve brain decides to remember! 🤔 *shrug*)

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 9, 2024 at 11:01 PM

I am also struck by the correspondence between the religious experience and death. I have come to see ingestion of certain entheogens as a way for people to try to understand death by experiencing it. I had **way** too much nitrous oxide before/during a procedure, and I was absolutely sure I was going to permanently lose consciousness. Nonetheless, the experience was calming: *life was what it was, what's left is what it is ... might as well smile*. This is common with the *ego death*.

My wife brought up another interesting point as a consequence of her near-death experience. While on a soup of opiates, going through organ-failure, she very clearly witnessed the visual features of two, very important people from her past, who had both died under tragic circumstances. They both looked like they were at their prime (ageless) and they were perfectly blissful (happy), figures that, as she explained, ultimately provided her with comfort. **Has anyone else experienced that?**

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 9, 2024 at 11:16 PM


If you guys aren't careful, this is going to turn into an essay.

I had a few other thoughts I wanted to share about my own bias(es):

1. **I live in an "photo-centric" era.** Images and icons are everywhere. I know the faces of people who died before I was born. I know the faces of people who died before my society developed. I know the face of Epicurus, himself, down to his cheekbones. But ancient Greeks, in terms of realistic representative art, were limited to statues, and they were usually either civic or mythological. Most grandkids did not have busts of their beloved grandma and grandpa on their mantle. To spontaneously witness the form of a 20-something friend during "dream-states" at various points in one's life would have been much more significant to a non-"photo-centric" world.

2. **I live in a prohibitory era** with regards to psychedelics. Most of us do, and most of the modern world is characterized by prohibition in some form at some time, albeit trying to demonize Gin in medieval England, to American zealots trying to ban Peyote ceremonies from native rituals. The suspicion of psychedelic chemicals is ubiquitous, and is utterly prohibited from children to the extent that we attempt to censor information. The point is, the average ancient Greek was not exposed to "*Reefer Madness*" and "*Just Say 'No'*" and would have seen been more likely to associate religion with the state of divine intoxication and the rituals used to induce it.

Post by “Root304” of July 9, 2024 at 11:32 PM

 Eh... My foray into psychedelics was pretty disasterous and almost entirely led to my adoption of Naturalism and Epicureanism. I had the psychedelic ideology in the back of my mind since I was a teenager as something I wanted to pursue someday. Eventually, I tried "mere" marijuana for a very short period of about 2 weeks. Spent the next year in and out of psyche wards because of it and the next 8 years in and out of pyschosis, attempting to piece the mind back together again. Needless to say that whole tree I was barking up has been completely uprooted and turned to kindling in my mind and now makes a pleasant, but roaring fire to which I throw all manner of superstition, magickal thinking and transcendent ideations and impulses onto. Still though I am not opposed to people doing them or opposed to people who do them, I just view their experiences and insights concerning it with very little value since adopting Epicurean Hedonism. It is complete dumb luck that I happened upon the one Philosophy that would singularly be the antidote to my ills...

My experiences with insanity and the residual foul memories and conceptions, generally has me taking the position that if "the supernatural" however one wishes to conceive of it *were* real, I would still regard it as extremely low value compared to just normal, naturalistic world as I perceive it. Epicurus' animal Gods that carry on formal friendships, self-sustaining activity and all the rest, is just way more relatable and frankly healthier way to view "ideal" beings that we allegedly all for better or worse have notions of in our minds. The theology redeems the whole idea of Gods for me.

Post by "Julia" of July 10, 2024 at 1:35 AM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

she very clearly witnessed the visual features of two, very important people from her past, who had both died under tragic circumstances. They both looked like they were at their prime (ageless) and they were perfectly blissful (happy), figures that, as she explained, ultimately provided her with comfort.

There are no outside persons inside my mind like that, so I would not expect to at some point have an experience of this kind. For me, death was different every time:

It was terror and fright.

It was despair and frantic effort.

It was abandonment and sadness.

It was erratic chaos and powerlessness.

It was relief and release in death by a thousand cuts.

[Quote from Twentier](#)

While on a soup of opiates, going through organ-failure

I am tempted to say her medication and condition influence her state of mind and allowed her to paint a more pleasant picture. For example, many opiates are serotonergic, which makes them pleasant and soothing, even beyond their specific opioid effects. She was probably cared for externally, so her fight was internal. That isn't always the case.

For example, when I ended up in hypothermia as a teenager, I had been injured and left for dead in difficult terrain. I knew where I was, so I knew what I had to do: 1. reach a path around six hours below my position, 2. three hour hike to nearest settlement. I soon resigned from life – paused, cried, made my peace; quickly, no daylight to waste! – and turned off all complex thought, so as to function like an autopilot in highway hypnosis, as if in trance. I remained in this thoughtless, un-aware, mindless state until I had reached the path and eventually lost consciousness while dragging myself towards the settlement. By chance, I was found, woken up – and immediately resumed on my 2nd mission objective: reach the settlement. The lady who had found me wanted me to stay put. I thought "Settlement!" and brushed her off. She wanted me to conserve my strength. "Settlement!", one step. She wanted me to stay in place until mountain rescue arrives. "Settlement!", another step. She said this and that, and I thought "Settlement! Settlement!", and just kept executing my task. The lady didn't make sense. She wasn't part of the plan. To me, she was just an odd and oddly persistent obstacle. If I hadn't been found, I'd simply have slipped away while asleep. If so, then what's my point with this story?

Did I dream, maybe? I don't remember – but I'm quite certain that my dream would have been about walking or crawling, about reaching my goal, about survival. Just like the two helpers which appeared for your wife were there to help her reach her goal. You see, to survive any given situation, we must survive it two-fold: as a body, and as a person. She could not do anything much for her body. It was being cared for. She had to focus on her survival as a person (and indirectly help her body in doing that). For a person to survive, it needs a secure attachment (the experience of a bond with other people), needs their attention/attunement/presence/connection as a person (instead of just the existence of a warm body in proximity; classic example here is the Still Face Experiment, less well-known is that the same thing happens with slightly delayed video feeds), and for enough space in that connection for any feelings; otherwise, defence mechanisms are activated to self-regulate, instead of regulating oneself through interaction with another; these are compartmentalisation, flattening of affect, et cetera. However, most defences are expensive cognitively (which wastes precious biochemical energy), and they keep the body in a higher state of arousal (in the sense of alertness/ready-ness) for a longer time. To avoid all that, it makes sense to have happy, friendly helpers guide the way, soothe the mind, and allow it to *effectively* regulate the autonomous nervous system, allow it to *effectively* send whichever signals the body needs to survive.

I survived as a person, because I wasn't even present as one. I came-to in a medical facility, even though I was awake the whole time. Shutting off conscious awareness is a dissociative defence, helps to conserve energy and allows to keep the physical state of high arousal going for however long is needed, which made sense in my example. I'd say that doesn't make one or the other more or less of a near-death experience. It just makes them different experiences.

And with that little opening speech, I circle back to the gods: I don't think near-death experiences are very consistent, and I think they very much depend on who you ask and what

they've experienced: pharmaceuticals, social context, age (especially child vs teenager/adult), type of survival situation, cultural backdrop. With the experiences so different, can we really conceive of them as to "pertaining to gods"? Shouldn't we rather think of them as nature's hopefully-not-last gift to us? Or should we rather redefine "god" in terms of what you've said below, regarding altered-state-of-mind experiences, more along the lines of "plant teachers", along the lines of shamanic and faith traditions which managed to continue their use of "divine rituals" of this type - which really is (or rather: was) quite omnipresent globally for most of humanity's existence 😊

[Quote from Twentier](#)

I had way too much nitrous oxide before/during a procedure, and I was absolutely sure I was going to permanently lose consciousness. Nonetheless, the experience was calming: life was what it was, what's left is what it is ... might as well smile. This is common with the ego death.

I hear you, but I'd like to note that - In my humble opinion - the calm "might as well smile" experience would more likely have been due to the pharmacology of nitrous oxide, than be secondary to the experience of ego death. Would you clarify which way you meant it? 😊

[Quote from Twentier](#)

To spontaneously witness the form of a 20-something friend during "dream-states" at various points in one's life would have been much more significant to a non-"photo-centric" world.

I agree. 👍

[Quote from Twentier](#)

2. I live in a prohibitory era with regards to psychedelics. [...] The point is, the average ancient Greek was not exposed to "Reefer Madness" and "Just Say 'No'" and would have been more likely to associate religion with the state of divine intoxication and the rituals used to induce it.

I agree. 👍

PS: Regarding the two-foldedness of survival, if your body survives, but you as a person don't, your body will exist, but have "lost its mind", one way or another; the simplest example is stupor, a "lights on but nobody home" type situation in which the body is physically fine and awake, but there's no activity relating to the outside world. The human just sits and stares. Countless other ways are possible, but this is Epicurean Friends, not Trauma Therapy dot com - just thought I should clarify that I meant it literal and not in some esoteric woo-woo type way



Post by “Eikadistes” of July 10, 2024 at 8:47 AM

[Quote from Root304](#)



Eh... My foray into psychedelics was pretty disasterous and almost entirely led to my adoption of Naturalism and Epicureanism.

I definitely don't mean to frame psychedelics as a panacea or a purely positive experience. *Set, setting, and mental disposition* (especially mental illness) can turn a trip into a miserable hell.

That said, I'm just speaking for myself ... I personally was unable to conceive of "the divine" until I ate mushrooms at age 19. Up until that moment in time, my personal opinion was that "God" was a delusion, "believers" were deluded, and "spirituality" was an empty word for the deluded. I rejected the "religious experience" as a dangerous hallucination, if it existed at all.

The possibility of having dreams in a wakeful state changed that for me.

Still, if I'm being honest, when it comes down to it, I'm still an atheist at heart.

I really just continue to wonder (thus, the source of this thread)...

"... *how in the Hell can anyone *actually* believe in gods?*"

Epicurean theology was something that never jived with me from the very being. Let's just get rid of the gods altogether. Fuck 'em, right? Who cares? Obviously Epicurus taught the opposite, but I really want to get in his head and understand why it matters at all if psychedelics aren't involved.

I had a lot of dreams, but never the form of a perfect humanoid that inspired me.

I'm just trying to get in the mind of someone who actually believes with confidence.

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 10, 2024 at 8:57 AM

[Quote from Julia](#)

There are no outside persons inside my mind like that, so I would not expect to at some point have an experience of this kind. For me, death was different every time:

It was terror and fright.

It was despair and frantic effort.

It was abandonment and sadness.

It was erratic chaos and powerlessness.

It was relief and release in death by a thousand cuts.

[...]

And with that little opening speech, I circle back to the gods: I don't think near-death experiences are very consistent, and I think they very much depend on who you ask and what they've experienced: pharmaceuticals, social context, age (especially child vs teenager/adult), type of survival situation, cultural backdrop. With the experiences so different, can we really conceive of them as to "pertaining to gods"? [...]

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These are all good points, and to reinforce @Root304 's observation, psychedelics are inconsistent and potential causes of more pain than pleasure. Additionally, all of this is dependent on our internal ecosystems, so reliably re-producing the experience of the divine is not universal with any one substance ... still, I can't identify with "the experience of the divine" without drugs.

That's just where I'm at with my personal experience. I've never seen blissful people in dreams that do not correspond with mortals that I have met in my life. (But I'd really like to!)

Right now, at best, as far as I can determine, (1) Epicurus said that the gods were evident because he became aware that Indians prayed to gods but separate from the Greeks (via Pyrrho through Nausiphanes), (2) His suggestion that piety comes from dreams is just a general way of saying "religion is social construct that evolved from basic human behaviors", (3) Hemarkhos, Demetrios, Philodemos, and Lucretius making indications that the gods breathe and converse is not a preconception, but inductive reasoning that happens to be coherent with the preconception, and (4) the actual gods don't really exist except as concepts in our minds.

Eh, I don't know. I really want to dream about Zeus once and put an end to it.

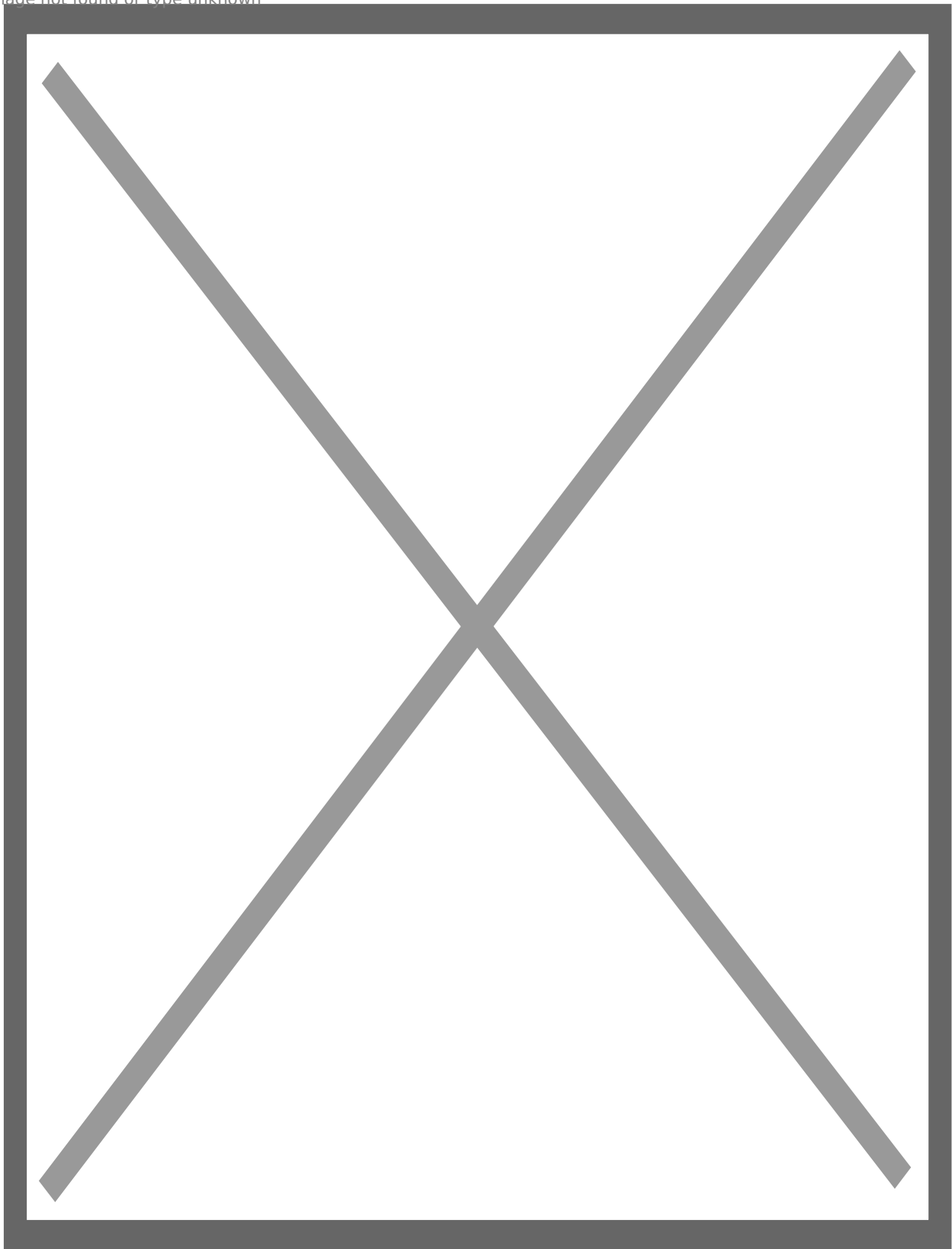
Post by “Kalosyni” of July 10, 2024 at 9:14 AM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

Eh, I don't know. I really want to dream about Zeus once and put an end to it.

[Eikadistes](#) you may like this...and it looks like the main explanation is a podcast recording...I only listened to the first ten minutes, but it seems like it may have some good stuff!

Image not found or type unknown



[Hypnos & the Poppy: Ancient Greek Dream Incubation — Mira Karakitsou](#)

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3954-give-us-an-example-of-god/>

In this episode, we'll be meeting the Greek gods of Night, Sleep, and Dreams — Nyx, Hypnos, the Oneiroi, Mnemosyne, and more. We'll explore dream rituals in...
atemplewild.com

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2024 at 9:32 AM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

(3) Hermarkhos, Demetrios, Philodemos, and Lucretius making indications that the gods breathe and converse is not a preconception, but inductive reasoning that happens to be coherent with the preconception, and (4) the actual gods don't really exist except as concepts in our minds.

I think Point 3 is correct and applies to Epicurus as well. Preconceptions are never the same as inductive reasoning, and I would say "statements of fact" are always better termed "conceptions," as "statements of fact" are never the same as preconceptions. "Opinions" is another good word, as Epicurus apparently said (Diogenes Laertius?) that opinions can be true or false, but unfortunately today the word "opinion" is firmly understood to imply that the opinion is "not true," so in most cases clarity will require some other word.

As to point 4 I would say the problem is the meaning of the term "the actual gods." If someone insists that the term "actual gods" must include Yahweh, Allah, Zeus, Thor, or whoever, then yes I would say the statement "actual gods do not exist except as concepts in our mind" is true, because *those gods* do not exist as independently real beings with bodies and locations and so forth.

However the term "actual gods" by no means requires accepting that Yahweh and the rest are included within that term. Therefore I would submit the statement "the actual gods don't really exist except as concepts in our minds" as that statement would be made in common discussion and understood by 99% of people today would be seen in Epicurean terminology as false.

I would say (as I think you did later in the post) that if Epicurus were here today he would say something like the following, which is what I understand the texts to mean when read fairly. Epicurus would say "divinity" or "god" is a term that humans apply to living beings that meet a certain criteria of total blessedness and total deathlessness, and that this term is applicable to and appropriate to describe beings which our physics and understanding of nature tell us do actually exist in the universe.

The problem always comes when someone makes specific assertions about some personality like Yahweh or Zeus or any of the rest actually existing. It's also a problem to make general assertions about the class of gods that goes beyond deathlessness and blessedness, as none of those assertions have ever proven to be reliable and reproducible and worthy of belief.

Thus it appears that the Epicureans speculated about "quasi-bodies" and "quasi-blood" to acknowledge that we can reasonably believe that the class of "gods" have certain qualities that allow them to exist in the universe, but that we do not have the ability to specify the details of those qualities given our lack of information from our vantage point here on Earth.

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2024 at 9:54 AM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

Yes, but of course just a little bit remains.

This is excellent work Bryan! I presume this is yours? Can we set up a "Demetrius Lacon" Thread or subforum to include this and the links to papyri from which you are working?

I am thinking a subforum in this section:

[Ancient Epicurean Texts \(300 BC to 300 AD\)](#)

Post by "Julia" of July 10, 2024 at 9:57 AM

[Quote from Root304](#)

It is complete dumb luck that I happened upon the one Philosophy that would singularly be the antidote to my ills...

I'm very glad you did have that complete dumb luck 😊 the "one joint too many made me psychotic" theme is part of the lives of two former acquaintances, so I can *begin* to imagine what it must have been like, how much effort it must have taken, and am happy that you made it back onto more solid ground. Well done! 👍

[Quote from Twentier](#)

a general way of saying "religion is social construct that evolved from basic human behaviors"

(Just to keep things clear: Religion is just a big cult, and a cult is just a predatory power structure which abuses vulnerable individuals by satisfying their need for attachment and care, while instilling fears in them, and causing them to raise their kids with the same empty, vulnerable hearts such that they, too, will fall prey to the same power structure and it can franchise. Kind of like many modern people who suffer from the limitless (vain & empty) desire for status will over-attached to a brand name to be a temporary band aid to their deeper psychological need to be seen and cared for as a person... -- Being religious is more specific than simply just having faith in something supernatural.)

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 10, 2024 at 9:59 AM

I thought about this and wanted to see what the herd thinks:

Epicurus explicitly warns against pursuing a political career, but does add a caveat that one *might* pursue a political career if they are so compelled by their natural disposition. Similarly, Epicurus advises against romantic exploits, but stops short of explicitly prohibiting them, so long as they do not cause turmoil. Similarly, in the *Epistle to Menoikeus*, Epicurus *clearly* recommends that we should believe in a god and pray faithfully... I wonder, like sex and politics if Epicurus would allow for anti-religious students to abstain from prayer if they are so inclined by their natural disposition?

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 10, 2024 at 10:02 AM

At the link I posted above (in post 29) I found a transcript further down that page, and found this:

Quote

For the Greeks, dreams were not imagined stories or even narratives, they were actually real visitations, the gods or the Oneiroi appearing to them as a vision. So I

want to read you a passage from the book [An Ancient Dream Manual](#) by Peter Thonemann. I think he does a really perfect job of explaining how the Greeks understood dreams. He says,

“Greek and Roman authors do not speak of ‘having a dream’ or ‘dreaming that x happened’, but rather of ‘seeing a dream’, where the dream is objectified or personified as a thing or person that appears to the dreamer in his or her sleep. The archetypal Greek or Roman dream is therefore not an experience...but a kind of apparition.”

OK, but that’s not to say that what appears in the dream is necessarily literal for the dreamer.

As Thonemann continues, “In their dreams [they] ‘see’ a sequence of discrete and isolated dream-elements (an eagle, a flock of sheep, a whale), each of which is then individually decoded as a symbolic representation of a person or thing in their waking world.”

Perhaps there were those who had a feeling that dreams of gods were part of reality, vs. those who saw dreams as only symbolic.

Post by “Cassius” of July 10, 2024 at 10:07 AM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

Similarly, Epicurus advises against romantic exploits, but stops short of explicitly prohibiting them, so long as they do not cause turmoil.

I think the last phrase there should be "does not cause more pain than pleasure" which would be the general way the analysis applies to all topics. Because although I know that not everyone interprets [PD10](#) this way, I think it is reasonably interpreted to mean that no activity can ever be "blanketly" ruled out because there is no fate and thus no absolute certainty as to result. It seems to me its always a problem to state any rule of conduct in terms of an absolute rule, as that would override the physics and the fact that nature gives us only pleasure and pain as guides.

[Quote from Twentier](#)

I wonder, like sex and politics if Epicurus would allow for a non-theistic rejection of the traditional gods if one is so inclined by their natural disposition?

Therefore (after my first comment) I would say that he would "allow" the possibility of such a position, if indeed in a particular case it does lead to a successful result, but he'd "warn against it" as going against general human experience.

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 10, 2024 at 10:34 AM

Here's another way I might approach the question for my own understanding:

How do I know that "the gods" in "dreams" are more real than centaurs and cyclops?

Post by “Cassius” of July 10, 2024 at 11:28 AM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

How do I know that "the gods" in "dreams" are more real than centaurs and cyclops?

That's a good approach and I bet it has several ways of responding. Both gods and centaurs are "real" from the perspective of affecting us, but gods are "more real" than centaurs if "real" is thought of as meaning that the thing has likely an ongoing physical existence capable of generating its own images on a regular basis. Here are two starting points that will need revision:

- Our observations of the physical universe tells us that "gods" are likely and possible, but that centaurs are not. In the case of gods we are talking about a wide class that could have very many forms, so long as those forms are consistent with blessedness and imperishability. In the case of "centaurs" that's an assertion of a very specific physical formation that conflicts with our long experience with both humans and horses.
- "Gods" as a class are very frequently the topic of our interest (receipt of images), but "centaurs" are very infrequently so. Repeatability / regularity is a major aspect of something being "real." Anything with an independent existence will regularly generate images of their own. Centaurs are combinations of images of men and horses which happen much less frequently.

I would be interested in [Bryan](#) 's thoughts on this. But the issue turns on the overriding question of the meaning of "real" and how we consider anything to be real.

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 10, 2024 at 11:37 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

In the case of gods we are talking about a wide class that could have very many forms, so long as those forms are consistent with blessedness and imperishability. In the case of "centaurs" that's an assertion of a very specific physical formation that conflicts with our long experience with both humans and horses.

Good point; let me be more general.

Let's use the example of "demons" (as a class). How do I know that the notion of "the gods" is an authentic preconception whereas that the notion of a "demon" is a false belief? For example, what if I were to posit that I have experienced a *prolepsis* of a being "with a permanent lack of pleasure" and I assign to that *prolepsis* the word "demon", as a class of perfectly-pleasureless beings?

Post by “Cassius” of July 10, 2024 at 12:04 PM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

Let's use the example of "demons" (as a class).

Well, "demons as a class" already sounds like a conceptual construct to me. Blessedness (pleasure) and Imperishability (life) seem to me things that are much more on a level of "sensation." "Gods" would be the conceptual embodiment of those characteristics (blessedness and life/imperishability) in perfected form. "Demons" i guess could be considered conceptual construction like "gods," but I don't think once you start talking about "demons" you are still talking about something that can be a true opinion generated by a prolepsis, just like the existence of centaurs would not be a true opinion, even though they can be generated by "images."

[Quote from Twentier](#)

I have experienced a prolepsis of a being "with a permanent lack of pleasure" and I assign to that prolepsis the word "demon", as a class of perfectly-pleasureless beings?

So I think I would first have to unpack that sentence in the same way. "Prolepsis" seems to me to be focusing on "arrangements" but to assign to a particular arrangement a label "a living person who permanently lacks pleasure" probably goes into "false opinion."

Once again I think these are great questions, and I am sure that my answers can be improved. I think these questions do have good answers, I am just not at all sure mine so far are the best that can be given.

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2024 at 12:26 PM

In addition I think we still have a lot more to clarify about what "a prolepsis" is. When we say "a prolepsis of ____" something, that something is coming out in our description as a conception, and I don't think that is right.

Prolepsis should *lead to formation* of concepts but not be concepts themselves, just like eyes never tell us what a thing is, but only give us raw data about color and brightness and sharpness and the like. Possibly even the eyes don't tell us "boundaries" either, of where one "thing" stops and another starts. Maybe "thing" is itself an opinion of the mind after our mind assembles the data from the senses.

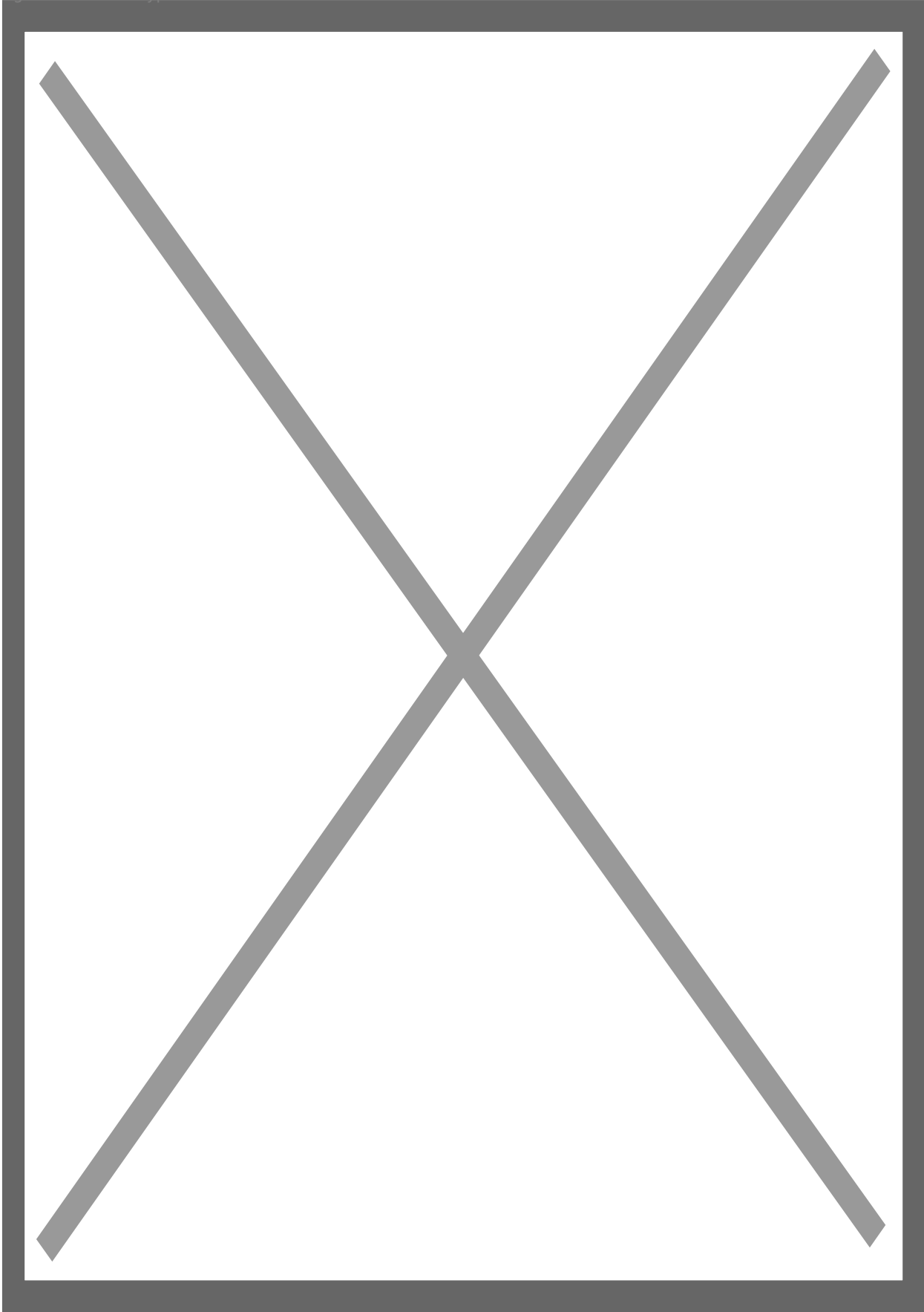
On the nature of "things" might itself have multiple meanings.

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2024 at 1:52 PM

Maybe this thread "Give Us An Example of A God!" should come after examination of "Give Us An Example of A Prolepsis!"

And I think the straightest path to that is going to be to analogize to the eye and the other faculties. In the case of the eye, according to this article the eye receives and processes into a form the brain can handle - in a single word - "light":

Image not found or type unknown



[Visual system - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

(Note: By quoting Wikipedia I am not suggesting that anything was required from modern science that wouldn't basically have occurred to Epicurus. It's an obvious question to ask what part of thinking takes place in the eye and what part takes place in the brain/soul/mind whatever. Also, I am following up on the prior comment that the eye probably doesn't even distinguish borders between separate "things." Picking out one "thing" from another presumably takes place in the brain too.)

Presumably the ears receive and process "sound" into a form the brain can handle. (And it is the mind that can pick music out of background noise.)

So what does the prolepsis faculty receive and process into a form the brain can handle?

I would bet Epicurus would say that it does **not** receive and process "gods" or "justice" or "oxen" or any concrete "thing" or "concept." I suspect he would say that those words ("gods" "justice" and "oxen") are concepts that the mind has formed because the faculty of prolepsis has done some kind of work **beforehand** to allow the brain to think about these concepts. Had the prolepsis faculty not done its work beforehand, the brain would never have been able to come up with "gods" or "justice" or "oxen" in the first place. Seeing an infinite number of copies of the Mona Lisa would never tell us to pick out the individual things that go into the Mona Lisa out from the background of the painting, unless some faculty of organization of relationships led us to first pick out "things" like hair and eyes and noses and mouths and trees in the first place. Even a gods could not create a world without something which would have allowed them to think of worlds in the first place. (Note that I am writing that carefully because maybe a "god" could take existing matter and refashion it into a "world," but no god could ever make something from nothing or make the universe as a whole.)

It's going to be something more fundamental - like repetitive or repeated "relationships" or "arrangements" - or something else that describes why we should recognize that one body has a special relationship to another body. And the receipt of "images" over time, in which bodies repeatedly appear to us in repetitive relationships to each other, would be a prime candidate to consider as what it is that proleptises "receives and processes."

No doubt someone else can do a lot better than that, but I think that's the direction, and so long as we continue to discuss "concepts" as what prolepsis is receiving and handing over, I don't think we make progress toward giving due credit to either the faculty of prolepsis or the theory of images.

Diogenes Laertius - it seems like I have read commentators explain this word "apperception" in

32 below as a reference to the "repeatability" of the phenomena. Could it be that the "repeatability" of something makes the most difference in justifying us to consider something to be "real" or "true":

[32] Nor is there anything which can refute the sensations. For a similar sensation cannot refute a similar because it is equivalent in validity, nor a dissimilar a dissimilar, for the objects of which they are the criteria are not the same; nor again can reason, for all reason is dependent upon sensations; nor can one sensation refute another, for we attend to them all alike. Again, the fact of apperception confirms the truth of the sensations. And seeing and hearing are as much facts as feeling pain. From this it follows that as regards the imperceptible we must draw inferences from phenomena. For all thoughts have their origin in sensations by means of coincidence and analogy and similarity and combination, reasoning too contributing something. And the visions of the insane and those in dreams are true, for they cause movement, and that which does not exist cannot cause movement.

[51] For the similarity between the things which exist, which we call real and the images received as a likeness of things and produced either in sleep or through some other acts of apprehension on the part of the mind or the other instruments of judgment, could never be, unless there were some effluences of this nature actually brought into contact with our senses.

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 10, 2024 at 2:06 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Maybe this thread "Give Us An Example of A God!" should come after examination of "Give Us An Example of A Prolepsis!"

fyi...Don started this thread not too long ago:

Post

[Prolepsis Citations from Long & Sedley](#)

This thread is an offshoot of this thread:

[epicureanfriends.com/thread/?postID=31229#post31229](https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/?postID=31229#post31229) In dealing with the prolepseis over there, I decided to turn to Long & Sedley's The Hellenistic Philosophers ([which is available to borrow on Internet Archive](#) with a free account) to see what they have to say. It turns out they cite a number of instances of mention of the prolepseis/preconceptions. Their numbering system (ex. 21A 4) uses their individual section, cited text, then their subsection of...



Don

July 2, 2024 at 11:04 PM

Post by “Bryan” of July 10, 2024 at 2:32 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Repeatability / regularity is a major aspect of something being "real."

I agree, continuity is key.

10.50a: "[Impressions] render the image of a single continuous object (and preserve the continuity at a distance from the original source) according to the proportional impingement [of the impressions] from that source - out of the deep vibration of the atoms in that solid object."

[Quote from Twentier](#)

example, what if I were to posit that I have experienced a prolepsis of a being "with a permanent lack of pleasure"

Interesting! Just as we look to the blissful beings as models of the good life, we look to miserable beings to foster our gratitude (DRN book 2 opening, etc). To take this to the (speculative) extreme: Comparing myself to beings that do not die but are miserable -- would, even if I were also miserable, make me grateful at least to be mortal!

Post by “Godfrey” of July 10, 2024 at 4:51 PM

"Apperception" is an intriguing word that I've not given much attention to. Here's an excerpt from Wikipedia:

In [psychology](#), apperception is "the process by which new experience is assimilated to and transformed by the residuum of past experience of an individual to form a new whole".^[2] In short, it is to [perceive](#) new experience in relation to past experience. The term is found in the early psychologies of [Herbert Spencer](#), [Hermann Lotze](#), and [Wilhelm Wundt](#). It originally means

passing the threshold into consciousness, i.e., to perceive. But the percept is changed when reaching consciousness due to its entry into an already present interpretive context; thus it is not perceived but apperceived.

According to [Johann Friedrich Herbart](#), apperception is that process by which an aggregate or "mass" of presentations becomes systematized (apperceptions-system) by the accretion of new elements, either sense-given or as a product of the inner workings of the mind. He thus emphasizes in apperception the connection with the self as resulting from the sum of antecedent experience. Hence in education the teacher should fully acquaint himself with the mental development of the pupil, in order that he may make full use of what the pupil already knows.^[1]

[Alfred Adler](#) used the notion of apperception to explain certain principles of perception in child psychology. A child perceives different situations not as they actually exist, but by means of the biases prism of their personal interests, in other words, according to their personal apperception scheme.^[5]

Apperception is thus a general term for all mental processes in which a presentation is brought into connection with an already existent and systematized mental conception, and thereby is classified, explained or, in a word, understood; e.g. a new [scientific phenomenon](#) is explained in the light of phenomena already analysed and classified. The whole intelligent life of man is, consciously or unconsciously, a process of apperception, in as much as every act of attention involves the apperceptive process.

It seems to have some potential overlap with pattern recognition, although some (such as Wundt) think of it as a conscious process. I'm not sure if it's helpful or not to examine the word further, but it does seem to at least have some of the same issues as *prolepsis* in terms of pinning down a definition.

Post by “kochiekoch” of July 10, 2024 at 5:16 PM

This is cool! 😊

It's an old video, about 15 years old and about an hour long, but it's ideas about the origin of our ideas about the Gods is fascinating and first rate. Agreeing, naturally, with Epicurus that the belief in the Gods is innate but is composed of mechanisms the brain evolved for other purposes.

Enjoy! 😊

[Why We Believe in Gods - Andy Thomson - American Atheists 09 \(youtube.com\)](#)

Post by “Cassius” of July 10, 2024 at 7:15 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

It seems to have some potential overlap with pattern recognition, although some (such as Wundt) think of it as a conscious process. I'm not sure if it's helpful or not to examine the word further, but it does seem to at least have some of the same issues as prolepsis in terms of pinning down a definition.

Very good information, Godfrey, so this is going to cry out for our Greek scholars to examine that word and help us figure out how it was used elsewhere, and potentially how it was translated into Latin.

Post by “Pacatus” of August 25, 2024 at 3:14 PM

An off-point attempt at some humor, in terms of examples of "god":



Sorry ... 🤪

Post by “Godfrey” of August 25, 2024 at 4:51 PM

The missing Epicurean fragment: "live like a god among men [get a dog!]"

Post by “Novem” of August 29, 2024 at 12:32 PM

What would be the closest term to describe [Epicurean gods](#)? Naturalistic deism?

They are defined as higher beings relative to human beings that can live far longer or effectively forever with a way to replenish their bodies and who live pleasurably and virtuously, and that they live in the space between the worlds and are concerned with maintaining their own pleasure and avoid interfering with lesser beings as they are preoccupied with their own self-preservation and may suffer from pain if they do interfere. Humans, mortal beings, can experience an approximate "divinity" of the higher beings by living as Epicurean sages.

The term "god" has a heavy connotation and I am inclined to use "higher being" to get away from that, but I feel like that is underwhelming the point of them.

I found this term: *ietsist* -- "It is a Dutch term for a range of beliefs held by people who, on the one hand, inwardly suspect - or indeed believe - that "there must be something undefined beyond the mundane which can be known or proven", but on the other hand do not accept or subscribe to an established view of the nature of a deity offered by any particular religion." - From the Wikipedia article. But we are putting forth an idea of the gods rather than this weak agnostic theism.

Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2024 at 12:56 PM

I would say that I think your post illustrates how two of the most important things to do at the very start is:

1 - Get rid of every implication and every attribute we think we know about gods except that they are (1) living beings, (2) live totally happy lives, and (3) are deathless.

2 - Then consider everything after that to be a matter of lesser importance, on which you can come up with some reasonable theories, but can't be sure about the details. That's just like the stars and other things in the sky where you don't have much evidence. You can come up with possibilities that are consistent with basic physics, and harmonize with point 1, but there you have to be satisfied with multiple possibilities rather than single certainties.

As Velleius put it in the nature of the gods, it's Point 1 that is essential and the place where you can really stop. Point 2 may be helpful to some people, but not to others, and we don't have enough information to be totally sure how things really are. So if we go into Point 2 we really have to be careful about the limits of what we know and what we don't.

Point 1 is the part we can be sure about based on the reasoning given:

Quote

XVII. Here, then, you see the foundation of this question clearly laid; for since it is the constant and universal opinion of mankind, independent of education, custom, or law, that there are Gods, it must necessarily follow that this knowledge is implanted in our minds, or, rather, innate in us. That opinion respecting which there is a general agreement in universal nature must infallibly be true; therefore it must be allowed that there are Gods; for in this we have the concurrence, not only of almost all philosophers, but likewise of the ignorant and illiterate. It must be also confessed that the point is established that we have naturally this idea, as I said before, or prenotion, of the existence of the Gods. As new things require new names, so that prenotion was called πρόληψις by Epicurus; an appellation never used before. On the same principle of reasoning, we think that the Gods are happy and immortal; for that nature which hath assured us that there are Gods has likewise imprinted in our minds the knowledge of their immortality and felicity; and if so, what Epicurus hath declared in these words is true: "That which is eternally happy cannot be burdened with any labor itself, nor can it impose any labor on another; nor can it be influenced by resentment or favor: because things which are liable to such feelings must be weak and frail." We have said enough to prove that we should worship the Gods with piety, and without superstition, if that were the only question.

Going that far gets you to the point where you are certain that there is no need to live in dread of gods.

Going further into Point 2 gets you more into matters of "curiosity" rather than what you really need to know, and takes you into areas where you are "directed partly by nature and party by reason" where the conclusions are less certain. And there you get into areas where "waiting" and multiple possibilities are going to be the best you can do, and you start talking then about "quasi-bodies" and "quasi-blood" because you just don't have any more detail.

Quote

For the superior and excellent nature of the Gods requires a pious adoration from men, because it is possessed of immortality and the most exalted felicity; for whatever excels has a right to veneration, and all fear of the power and anger of the Gods should be banished; for we must understand that anger and affection are inconsistent with the nature of a happy and immortal being. These apprehensions being removed, no dread of the superior powers remains. To confirm this opinion, our curiosity leads us to inquire into the form and life and action of the intellect and spirit of the Deity.

XVIII. With regard to his form, we are directed partly by nature and partly by reason.

Post by “Eikadistes” of August 29, 2024 at 3:53 PM

[Quote from Novem](#)

Naturalistic deism?

I hesitate to apply "deism" to Epicurean theology because of the connotation of a creator. The deities in our case are products of nature, never masters. *Though*, "deism" does shoot closer to the mark when trying to convey a sense of distance between a worshipper and the object of their worship. Using contemporary jargon, I think Epicurean theology is compatible with terms like "*polytheism*" and "*henotheism*" (worship of a divine nature manifest as multiple deities), as well as, perhaps "*kathenotheism*" or "*monolatry*" (worship of one deity at a time), or maybe even "*inclusive monotheism*", depending on the context in which Zeus might be invoked.

Epicurus wrote about numerous (*technically* "infinite") individual deities (which qualifies the "poly-" part), and each of those deities shared the same divine nature (which might, *arguably*, justify adding the nuance of "mono-"). Also, we have evidence of ancient Epicureans who were both recognized pan-Hellenically as "Philosophers" and also as local priests; they would have made sacrifices or expressed piety to local deities while maintaining atomism. So, ancient Epicurean philosophy would have been seen as being compatible with Hellenic polytheism, so long as followers reject the Homeric interpretations of gods as being troublesome.

We often return to this point: there is a struggle in trying to define organic expressions of piety while employing vocabulary that has been trademarked by "Big Religion".

I think that part of this inquiry points back to Epicurus' exhortation to Menoikeus to maintain a consistent theology. The critique Epicurus made against the beliefs of the Athenian masses is just poignant and resonant as it is today: *Why would and/or how could a divine being prescribe/facilitate/instigate harm?* I think it is safe to say that the proposition by some that mass shootings (among other grotesque examples, like the holocaust, or sexual abuse of children) are "part of God's plan" is measurably disturbing (in that it produces anxiety). A pre-modern analogue to this was the inability by most people to provide a confident explanation for atmospheric electrical discharge. The prescription for either is theological consistency.

At the end of the day, I think part of my feeling that some of these words are limited is a point cannot be made more digestible with a proverbial spoonful of sugar because it is one of the fundamental spiritual practices we have, in reciting the definitions of key concepts: if one is willing to use the term "god" in the first place, one must admit that "god" is perfect. The "god of rock" strums the best guitar solos, the "god of pop" is an peerless performer, the "Lord of the Dance" would never trip over their own feet, the "Great One" has the best statistics in the NHL,

so a "god" of humans would never condemn humanity, and the "god" of living beings would not threaten lives, and the "divine nature", itself, cannot be responsible for harm.

While I struggle with the idea of piety, *personally*, **this** is where I find it to be useful, not necessarily in constructing a positive image of god in my mind, but in deconstructing incoherent assumptions that are largely informed by either unexamined myths or intentional propaganda.

That was a bit of a tangent; I think really just meant to answer with, "**atomistic polytheism**".

Post by "Joshua" of August 29, 2024 at 5:39 PM

Polyenphysiszodeism.

Innumerable gods who are living beings and have their existence entirely in nature, but stand aloof from human affairs.

I hold a copyright on that term! 😎

Post by "Novem" of August 29, 2024 at 6:18 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

Polyenphysiszodeism.

Innumerable gods who are living beings and have their existence entirely in nature, but stand aloof from human affairs.

I hold a copyright on that term! 😎

Poly - many

En - Within

Physis - Nature

Zo - animal or living being

Deism - god(s), and non-interventionist at that
Great -ism, Joshua!

Post by “Don” of August 29, 2024 at 6:34 PM

Polyenphysiszodeism™



Well played, [Joshua](#) .

Post by “Godfrey” of September 27, 2024 at 3:37 PM

NON SEQUITUR By Wiley



Post by "Eikadistes" of December 28, 2024 at 11:03 PM

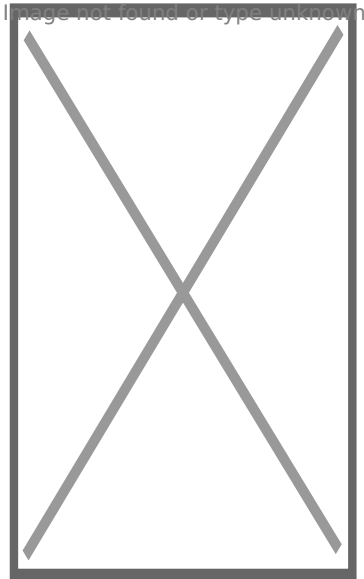
I came across this quotation in the [de Lacey translation](#):

According to Philodemus, *“even though god was not born, yet he is composed of soul and body and with this nature he is necessarily a living creature.”* (On Methods of Inference)

What do you make of this proposition?

Post by “Cassius” of December 29, 2024 at 7:14 AM

FWIW here is a link to page 75 in the text where that appears:



[Philodemus On Methods Of Inference De Lacey : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

On Methods of Inference or On Signs
archive.org

There's a lot more context but here is part of it:

Quote

Thus we shall use successfully the inference from living beings, when we consider that nothing prevents god from being similar in body to man since man alone of living beings in our experience is capable of thought. For god cannot be conceived apart from

thought; and even though god was not born, yet he is composed of soul and body and with this nature he is necessarily a living creature.

Post by “Kyle” of December 29, 2024 at 4:28 PM

> For god cannot be conceived apart from thought

I was confused by this phrase, but I think in context this must mean that god/a god can't be conceived of as a thoughtless being (like a p-zombie).

Post by “kochiekoch” of December 30, 2024 at 4:20 AM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

According to Philodemus, “even though god was not born, yet he is composed of soul and body and with this nature he is necessarily a living creature.” (On Methods of Inference)

What do you make of this proposition?

The gods are projections of ourselves, and are just like us, except better. ☐☐

Post by “Don” of December 30, 2024 at 7:52 AM

Here's the official transliteration:

χων πορευόμενοι καθάπερ ἡμεῖς
[δ]’ ἀέρος. πρὸς δὲ τὸ τρίτον, ὅτι πο-
τὲ μὲν καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπαραλλά-
κτων μεταβησόμεθ’, ὅταν ἦι τι

Ἐδισταζόμενον τῶν περὶ [αὐ]τὰ
συμβαίν[όν]των, τῷ δὲ τὸ [μὲν ἐ-]
ξ ἑναργείας καταλαμβάν[ε]σθαι
τὸ δὲ μὴ πρόδηλον εἶναι, [χρ]ησόμε-
θα σημείωι τῷ βλεπομέ[ν]ωι πρὸς
10τὴν παραδοχὴν τοῦ φα[ινο]μέ-
νου· ποτὲ δὲ [ἀπὸ τ]ῶν οὐκ [ἀπ]αραλ-
λάκτων, ἐ[φὸ] καὶ καθὸ μ[ετ]έχει
τῆς αὐτ[ῆς γε] κοινότη[τος] τῶν
ὁμοίων αὐτοῖς συμπτωμάτων,
οἷον ὅταν [τινὰ] μὲν ἀνθρώποις
μ[όνο]ις ἐ[οί]κη<ι>, τινὰ δ' ἐρ[ο]κότα τ[ῶ]ι θ[ε]-
ῶι [ζ]ῶιά ἐστίν. εὐστόχως ἄ[ρα τ]ῆι ἐ[κ]
ζῶ[ι]ων μεταβάσει χρ[η]σόμεθα,
νο[μίζοντες] οὐδὲν [κωλύειν]
[μὴ τῷ φρονεῖν μ]ὲν ἀνθρ[ώ]ποις]
ὠ[μοιωμένον] τὸν θεὸν ὑπ[ά]ρχ[ειν]
διὰ τὸ τὸν] ἄνθρωπον φρον[ή-]
σε[ως μόνον τῶν] παρ' ἡμῖν ζῶιων
δεκτικ[όν, φρ]ονήσεως δὲ χωρὶς
μ[ὴ νοεῖσθ', ἀλλ]ᾶ μὴ γεννᾶσθαι
συνεσ[τηκέναι]· δ' ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ
σώμα[τος· καὶ ἔσ]ται ζῶιον σὺν
τούτῳ [καὶ ἀθ]ά[νατον]. πρὸς...

The "body.....'living being'" line is highlighted below...

ΣΥΜΒΑΙΝΟΥΣΙ ΤΩΝΤΩΙ ΔΕ ΤΟ
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 ΖΩΜΑ ΙΖΩΙΟΝ ΣΥΝ
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 ΖΕΤΟ ΝΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΗΤΕ
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 ΖΕΙΠΤΕΙΝ ΕΤΕΙ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟ ΕΙΝΑΙ
 ΖΗΤΟΙΟΙ ΛΟΙΣ ΠΟΤΕ ΤΟ ΠΟΙΣ
 ΖΗΤΕΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΑΡΗΜΙΝ
 ΖΙΣΙΝ ΟΝ ΟΙ ΔΕ ΕΑΝΤΑ ΕΙΝΑΙ
 ΖΗΤΟΥ ΥΤΕ ΜΗΝ ΤΟΥΝΑΝ
 ΖΙΟΝ ΤΩΙ ΠΡΟΚΕΙΜΕΝΩΙ ΠΡΟΝΗ
 ΖΥ ΔΙΚΑΤΑΝ ΤΗΣ ΩΙ ΔΕ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ
 ΖΩΙ ΦΑΙΝΟΜΕΝΩΝ ΕΠΙΛΟΓΙΣ
 ΖΩΣ ΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΤΑ ΑΥΤΟ ΔΕΙΝ ΤΗΝ

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 30, 2024 at 8:57 AM

[Quote from Kyle](#)

> For god cannot be conceived apart from thought

I was confused by this phrase, but I think in context this must mean that god/a god can't be conceived of as a thoughtless being (like a p-zombie).

For me, I would take this to mean that god cannot be experienced apart from thought. ---> God exists only as a mental construct.

Post by “Cassius” of December 30, 2024 at 10:31 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

For me, I would take this to mean that god cannot be experienced apart from thought. ---> God exists only as a mental construct.

Just for clarity to lurkers, I think most everyone agrees with the first sentence, at least as having something to do with "images."

But as to the second sentence, that's the idealist position, and others take the realist position that they exist regardless of whether we think about them.

Post by “Cassius” of December 30, 2024 at 10:33 AM

The conversation has moved on somewhat from this point, but I just started another thread on a particular excerpt from Lucretius as to the logical possibilities as to how anything can be "eternal." I think that excerpt is relevant to this "gods" discussion as well, because if they are to be deathless they must somehow relate to one of those categories.

Thread

[The Logical Possibilities As To What Can Be Eternal \(Applicable to Gods As Well\)](#)

In podcast 262 I was going through the ways that Lucretius was proving that the soul cannot be eternal, and came across this section in which Lucretius sets out the logical ways in which something *could* be eternal. In addition to the soul aspect I think this is helpful in the way it describes (1) the universe as a whole is eternal - by deduction from the fact that there is nothing "outside" the universe, and (2) that the atoms and void are eternal because they are able to "beat back assaults"...



Cassius

December 30, 2024 at 10:26 AM

Post by “Eikadistes” of December 31, 2024 at 12:55 AM

Later, in *Methods*, Philodemus makes a statement that seems to support what was stated above: “We should refer our **notion** of the gods to **the revelations which take place by mental perception** and which guarantee **clearly** that heavenly and eternal beings exist.”