

Earthly Gods

Post by “Pacatus” of December 9, 2025 at 12:53 PM

There have been lots of discussions on here about the nature of the [Epicurean gods](#) – including the “idealist” versus “realist” interpretations. But, under either interpretation, I have had trouble with the notion that all the gods are beings who exist only in some cosmic “intermundia” (Lucretius). Epicurus would surely have been aware of the very earthly Greek gods, such as Hestia and Demeter, as archetypal representations of earthly elements and functions – and especially Gaia as a divine personification of the earth itself.

In going back through some past discussions, I especially appreciated Elli’s post #12 here: [RE: Epicureans and the Ancient Greek Gods \(Imagery of "Gods" / "Gods Among Men"\)](#)

So, anyway, I just wanted to see if anyone else has some ideas on this ...

Post by “Eikadistes” of December 9, 2025 at 1:23 PM

I believe that this suggestion only comes once in Book 5 (translated by Munro):

**[146 illud item non est ut possis credere, sedes](#)
[147 esse deum sanctas in mundi partibus ullis.](#)
[148 tenvis enim natura deum longeque remota](#)
[149 sensibus ab nostris animi vix mente videtur;](#)**

"This too you may not possibly believe, that the holy seats of the gods exist in any parts of the world: the fine nature of the gods far withdrawn from our senses is hardly seen by the thought of the mind..."

Just that much might paint a picture of the gods living in deep space, however...

**[150 quae quoniam manuum tactum suffugit et ictum,](#)
[151 tactile nil nobis quod sit contingere debet;](#)
[152 tangere enim non quit quod tangi non licet ipsum.](#)**

"...and since it has ever eluded the touch and stroke of the hands, it must touch nothing which is tangible for us; for that cannot touch which does not admit of being touched in turn."

Lucretius, as earlier Epicureans (I'll explain below and provide examples) ties in the notion that the "homes" of the gods are "untroubled", *not* by physical *distance* from weather and climate,

but through *physical disengagement* from the bulky, terrestrial particles that comprise terrestrial matter. Epicurean authors always provide the analogy of the tiniest "mental particles".

I think the other stanzas reinforce this interpretation. In Book 2:

646 omnis enim per se divom natura necesses
647 inmortali aevo summa cum pace fruatur
648 semota ab nostris rebus seiunctaque longe;

"For the nature of gods must ever in itself of necessity enjoy immortality together with supreme of repose, far removed and withdrawn from our concerns...".

In this sense, I believe the "removal" of the gods refers to their *disposition*, not their *location*.

Here again, in Book 3:

18 ... sedesque quietae,
19 quas neque concutiunt venti nec nubila nimbis
20 aspergunt neque nix acri concreta pruina
21 cana cadens violat semperque innubilus aether
22 integit et large diffuso lumine ridet:

..."their tranquil abodes which neither winds do shake nor clouds drench with rains nor snow congealed by sharp frosts harms with hoary fall: an ever-cloudless ether overcanopies them, and they laugh with light shed largely round" (Ibid.).

I maintain, based on "On the Form of a God" by Dēmētrios of Lakonía, and from fragments by Apollodoros (the "Tyrant of the Garden") that the description of the "tranquil abodes" avoiding weathering by terrestrial forces is a description of the image of their homes in our mind. We would never imagine a perfect being to live in a dark tower, silhouetted by lightning, nor, likewise, imagine a flourishing humanoid in the deep, cold, dark, emptiness of the metakosmos.

Here's how I justify it in my [paper](#):

Quote

Apollódōros the scholarch infers that "the dwellings" of the fearless gods, unruffled by ferocious winds and falling stars "have to be far away from the forces in our world" (*Ibid.*, Col. 9). He stipulates that the security of these "locations" may not be preserved as a result of "*distance*" so much as a result of physical *disengagement* "from the hindering factors that clash against each other". Epíkouros concurs that "it is possible for their nature to exist even with many troubles surrounding it" (*On Piety*, Col. 3.3-7). For "even if the things which generate" divine images were "as far away as anyone could wish", the mundane images of people stored in memory would *still* combine with the preconception of "blessedness" and form the image of gods who "appear" to

“transcend” any amount of “intervening distance” (Philódēmos, *On Gods III*, Col. 9). Memory, itself “transcends” the perils of our perishable plasma through a perpetual replenishment of minute, mental motes, “having changed each time for producing a thought” (*On the Form of a God* 12). Dēmétrios explains that “the memories people retain of” visual impressions were first “received as children” (*Ibid.*, 11), and despite decades of disruption, those representations can be reproduced continuously. Through contemplation, a supplicant summons a memory of *blessedness* and transforms the mind into a holy menagerie, capable of hosting a variety of divine forms. After extensive consideration, Apollódōros concludes that the “dwellings” of “the gods” must be constructed “from some of their” own, finely-grained “elements”, repurposed through an act of contemplation (*On Gods III*, Col. 10).