

The Epicurean Gods As A Standard To Which To Aspire

Post by "Cassius" of July 17, 2018 at 8:26 AM

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NB: I think it's crucial to deconstruct "belief" as we typically employ it. With respect to Martin K., I think that the "gods" part of his statement is on the money, BUT, "belief" in our society tends to indicate 'faith', with a connotation of 'dogmatic' or 'blind faith' in a supernatural sense. This wouldn't jive with Epicureans from any age.

We may translate Epicurus in 'Letter to Menoeceus' as recommending "belief" in a natural "God", but we can confirm that Epicurean epistemology does not accept 'faith' as a reasonable criterion of knowledge. In other words, we don't need to "believe" in something with which we have direct experience.

Therein, I think, lies the key: *whatever* he was talking about is grounded in natural experience. Whether we're discussing happy space beings, or the prototype of a superhuman ubermensch, or Star Trek-ish energy beings of pure pleasure, or preconceptions experienced in dream states, 'belief' is not required.

Cassius Amicus: " BUT, "belief" in our society tends to indicate 'faith', with a connotation of 'dogmatic' or 'blind faith' in a supernatural sense. This wouldn't jive with Epicureans from any age." I COMPLETELY agree with you Nathan, and in my humble opinion I think Epicurus would to - as I think Martin Kalyniuk probably does too.

MK: Spot on! Epicurus doesn't think faith is a valid vehicle to knowledge.

His argument for thinking there are gods is that we have such a deeply chiseled impression of them on our minds as human beings.

Any concept we have must have come somehow from outside us from something materially real. Therefore there are really gods.

For Epicurus - as for Aristotle - the senses are always substantively correct. Mistakes are made in the interpretation of the knowledge they yield to us. But if all men claim to see substantially the same thing, say, "white" or experience something, perhaps, "being cold." They might misinterpret the details or the how and why, but not the phenomena itself.

Atheism for Epicurus would be at bottom an attack on the reliability of sense perception.

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/485-the-epicurean-gods-as-a-standard-to-which-to-aspire/?postID=1294#post1294>