

New Sedley Chapter On Ancient Greek Atheism

Post by “Kalosyni” of March 19, 2022 at 11:25 AM

The section on page 7 - "Epicurus: a Crypto-atheist?" Is highly informative and illuminating.

Here is a quote from Sedley's paper:

Quote

Even according to the alternative, realist interpretation, Epicurus sides with atheism to the extent that he denies all divine intervention in the running of the world, thus claiming to liberate his followers from the fear of divine wrath. But on the idealist

(p. 147) interpretation his position is one that in most theological contexts would be called fully atheistic, and indeed was so called by Epicurus' own critics. Why, if so, would he not declare his atheism openly? Part of the answer may be that Epicurean communities, wherever they sprang up, relied on toleration from the local authorities, and a reputation for atheism, with its implied rejection of civic cults, would have hampered that objective. But in any case, Epicurus on moral grounds sincerely recommended participation in religious cults as a proper expression of respect for ideal beings, a stance which would have sat very oddly with an outright assertion that these beings do not actually exist.