

New Sedley Chapter On Ancient Greek Atheism

Post by “Matt” of March 23, 2022 at 10:33 AM

I think one of the biggest concerns I had with the gods discussion deals with sincerity. Epicurus would've needed, in whatever way, to believe that the gods (in whatever form) were “real” (in whatever sense atomic beings or images in the mind). If not, his opponents that claimed that he was purely avoiding a charge of impiety would be correct. I don't believe he was hiding a complete disbelief and fabricated a theological system to avoid being executed... like Socrates was, but rather he just adapted his system to what he knew of popular religion and the myths...and we ended up with atomic [epicurean gods](#).

I do hold that sincerity of belief is important to trusting the rest of a person's character. If perhaps Epicurus was acting in a manner that fit the description held by his opponents, that he was merely hiding a form of atheism while constructing a false theology that allowed for him to remain in good standing with the pious Greeks, then that would cause the rest of his system to be called into question in my opinion. That would be a very troubling situation. But I don't believe he did that.