

A line of questioning on Epicurean Theology

Post by “Don” of August 1, 2022 at 7:09 AM

Epicurus's theology is primarily directed at removing one's fear of the gods. He wanted to get people to rid themselves of the ideas that their every move was being tallied, and the gods were either going to rain down divine punishment now or after death, or they were going to bestow blessings on the pious. Neither of those scenarios were going to happen according to Epicurus.

He maintains "gods exist" but "not as the hoi polloi believe." As you'll read here and elsewhere, there are two primary perspectives on the gods in modern scholarship:

1. Epicurus believed there were real beings existing somewhere in the universe who were eternally blissful, who had bodies that didn't decay, and who took no interest or action in human affairs, and who did NOT create or maintain the universe.
2. Epicurus used the vocabulary of the "gods" to describe mental concepts or archetypes of what a blissful, incorruptible being would be like and that Epicureans could use those concepts as an ideal of what a blissful existence could be like. David Sedley is one of the prime advocates for this position.

1 is referred to as the realist approach. 2 is the idealist approach. Personally, I fall well towards 2 in my current understanding.