

Episode One Hundred Thirty-Five - The Letter to Menoeceus 02 - On The Nature of the Gods

Post by "Joshua" of August 14, 2022 at 2:26 PM

I've never been more annoyed with myself after recording than I am today... ☐

I've always thought that two things were crucial for anyone presuming to hold forth under the name of Epicurus. The first was to make an honest and diligent effort to understand what he was writing. The second was to express that understanding to others, in a way that was consistent with the plain reading of the text, as well as with the tenor of the whole philosophy.

I don't think I succeeded very well with the second part. Nevertheless, and in lieu of rehashing the issue, I want to take some time to pursue an angle that [Kalosyni](#) introduced.

We were discussing the consideration of an Epicurean god as an image, eidolon, or archetype, and Kalosyni brought up Joseph Campbell. I think it's a connection deserving of further comment.

A word I kept using was 'demarcate'. What I was attempting to illustrate was the contrast I perceived, and wanted to patrol, between the natal moral claims of "religion" and the epistemological claims about the gods being made by Epicurus. And yet I think that Joseph Campbell would suggest that the moral claims have nearly always been secondary and incidental in myth and religion, and that the symbolism and emotional impact has always been primary. I don't know---and it's been many years since I read Campbell, so that I don't know whether I could say more.

One thing I will say is that Lucretius had an advantage that Epicurus did not have. Epicurus could not have respectably cast himself as a Prometheus figure--it would have looked ridiculous. Lucretius, though--writing from the comfortable distance of two and a half centuries--suggests exactly this comparison, and it's this symbol, more than any eidolon of the gods, that I find to be a compelling reason to push forward in the pursuit of pleasure and happiness.