

Epicureanism as the spiritual essence or 'religion' of an entire community

Post by “DavidN” of January 26, 2024 at 8:09 PM

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

I think it's fair to think of ancient Epicureans as de facto atheists the way Plutarch thought of them. The acceptance of the existence of the gods whether honestly or pretentiously was useful in a social context where atheism were discriminated against and associated with a significant degree of social exclusion. Today we often use the term 'social exclusion' lightly and synonymously with 'unfairness' and everybody feels brave enough to 'fight' social discrimination in all its forms but in a pre-modern agrarian society social exclusion meant your very survival was at stake. Why would someone not want to participate in the sacrifices and share in the meat? In the early modern era the Catholic Church tended to regard the beliefs of deists as little more than a damage control cover for atheism and they were basically right. Today deism has essentially disappeared because no damage control is necessary.

I've never liked this argument, there is I believe enough in the surviving texts to suggest that this was not the case. And my personal stance on atheism has always been that the [Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence](#) and thus prefer an agnostic approach until proven otherwise. Thus I tend to see Atheism as unnecessarily nihilistic. Which I feel is more in line with the teachings of Epicurus.