

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

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 2, 2024 at 1:00 AM

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

My view is that Epicurus' portrayal of the gods as part of the natural world was an elegant way to answer why the hell the whole of mankind believed and worshipped them. Even today we are not quite sure why people made up religion.

I identify with that perspective.

Hell, for **that** matter, **so did Philodemus**:

“...no one has been prolific in finding convincing demonstrations for the existences of the gods; nevertheless all men, with the exception of some madmen worship them, as do we...”

“...οὐδεὶς εἰκνουμένας περὶ τ[οῦ **θ**]εοῦς ὑπάρχε[ιν τὰς ἀπο]δείξεις εὐπ[όρησ]εν· ὁμῶς δε [σέβ]ονται πάντε[ς εἰ μὴ παρ]άκοποι τινε[ς αὐτοῦς...” (On Piety, Col. 23, 13-17)

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

So modern scientists are almost universally atheist

Not quite. To my surprise, it's closer to *half-and-half*.

For example, nearly 40% of American chemists surveyed "believe in 'God'" according to a 2009 Pew Research poll [<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2009/...e%20this%20view>]. In a more recent study, more "than half of scientists in India, Italy, Taiwan and Turkey self-identify as religious" who largely do not see a conflict between religion and science [<https://phys.org/news/2015-12-w...scientists.html>].

(I'm not making a point, just sharing a discovery)

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

But then nobody has worked out a generally accepted scientific theory about how and why religion was developed by humans.

A textbook I still have from college called *Supernatural as Natural: A Biocultural Approach To Religion* (Winkelman and Baker 2010) provides a number of great approaches that are useful to

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3359-epicureanism-as-the-spiritual-essence-or-religion-of-an-entire-community/?postID=29033#post29033>

objectively evaluate spiritual experiences and religious behaviors. It suggests that religiosity is rooted in ritualized animal behavior and altered states of consciousness. It then describes the ways that various social roles, norms, and cultural innovations developed from those neurobiological roots.

I think that a piece of *ancient Epicurean Theology* bears a striking resemblance to *modern Anthropology of Religion*, which you recognize later in your post:

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

But Epicurus had to find an answer in alignment with his own views about the nature of the universe (his cosmology), the nature of man (his anthropology)...

Epicurus was in a unique position in a newly-connected world, where ancient Hellenic peoples were being introduced to new forms of spirituality ... and they looked strikingly similar to the tones, attitudes, and topics to existing forms of ancient Greek religion. Likewise, our new world is connected by a network of servers that provide us the tools to compare and contrast everything from the beliefs of aboriginal Australians to Dharma ... I agree, there is a parallel in method.