

Pros and Cons Of Considering Epicurean Philosophy To Be A "Religion"

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Epicureanism deserves to be called a religion because it systematically answers the most profound questions of life. Aristotle managed to create an all-encompassing philosophical system too and we know that the Christian church establishment made good use of the services of Aristotle's 'philosophy' for least one full millennium.

Indeed, Christianity would not have evolved to something beyond a cult for society's lost and confused if it hadn't assimilated various aspects of ancient philosophy. So if Christianity could manage to profit from philosophy and remain a religion so too could Epicurean philosophy assimilate various religious tropes to benefit from their appeal to the human soul and at the same time remain true to itself.

Let's consider what alternative Epicureanism can offer to the prevailing theistic and nihilistic theories about the origin of the universe.

Daniel Everett (an ex-missionary turned atheist and linguist known for his theories about the origin of language) explains why it would make better sense to think of the universe as the collective output of a divine culture of gods, rather than the output of a single creator.

'One frequent theistic answer to the question of how DNA and subsequent forms of life evolved is the 'watchmaker' theory. Watches were, at the time of this metaphor, the highest technology known. For many reasons, discussions of philosophers and theists often revolve around the most advanced technology of the day. In this case, watches are intricate, complicated, hierarchical in structure and obviously designed. So if someone found a watch on a distant planet, the presence of that watch would indicate that somewhere there was a designer who had a purpose in mind for it, designed it and fabricated it.

There are modern theologians and theistic scientists who consider this argument sound, substituting a complex organ such as the eye in place of the watch. But philosopher David Hume pointed out three serious problems with the watch analogy. First, the materials of the watch are not found naturally - the watch is built from human-made materials. This makes the analogy artificial. As Hume said, it would make much more sense to use something composed exclusively of organic materials, such as a squash, instead of a watch because one can observe that squashes come forth on their own.

Hume's second objection is that one may not use experiential knowledge to infer a conclusion about non-experiential knowledge. If you understand what a watch is, you also know that the watch was created. One could even observe a watch being made. Yet no one could have any direct experience with the creation of the world. Thus the conclusion that because a watch has

a designer the universe also does is not only empirically unjustified but also illogical.

Finally, Hume remarked that even if a watch did show that every complicated thing, the universe in particular, has a designer, this lesson would still have nothing to say about the nature of that designer. Such reasoning thus, even if it had not been shown to be invalid, supports no known religion or idea of a deity above any other.

Perhaps the most effective argument against the watchmaker analogy, however, comes from culture. No person can make a watch or its component materials by themselves. A watch is the output of a culture, not a designer. If the universe was designed, this design would have required a society, not a god, unless that god were far different than it is described in the major religions.'

We could thus theorize that the part of observable reality we call the universe is an artefact created by the divine activities and interactions of the [Epicurean gods](#) residing in the intermundia. As a divine artefact, the universe has a divine purpose or meaning (hence refuting cosmological nihilism) but this purpose is relevant only to the gods, and completely irrelevant and infathomable to us.