

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

Post by "Don" of March 23, 2024 at 12:24 PM

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

1. What might Epicurus have answered if he was asked what natural law necessitates the existence of the gods?
2. Why couldn't the atomic universe simply do without them?
3. Why couldn't they be fully mortal regardless of what the masses think?

1. There is no necessity. The universe does not depend on the existence of the gods. Epicurus posits that all peoples appear to have a conception of gods, and therefore gods appear to have some kind of existence. "Gods exist/There are gods" θεοὶ εἰσὶν is a pretty basic statement with no flourishes. How they exist appears to have filled volumes.

2. The universe could exist without them. They serve no creative nor sustaining function for the universe.

3. The "common" knowledge of a god is that it is not mortal. Per Epicurus's definition (from looking at the common knowledge), gods are exactly that which is blessed and incorruptible. That's it. Those two characteristics define what a god is.

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

At any rate nobody can doubt that Epicurean theology was supposed to function as a medicine against harmful notions regarding the supernatural. The ancient Epicurean conception of the gods worked well as a remedy but only in the context of the ancient polytheistic society it was developed for. ... So I think we need to work out a new theological medicine specifically designed for an era in which the most popular harmful notions regarding the universe are based on monotheism or on nihilism. A profitable solution would be to adapt the most crucial aspects of Epicurean theology to a single God only. The result would be a sort of deism but somewhat different from the enlightenment-era deism of the American founding fathers.

I fully agree Epicurean theology was meant as a medicine, in fact, it's the first "medication" in the Tetrapharmakos. But I see no disparity in it being applied to polytheism or monotheism. The most important Epicurean theological idea is that we have nothing to fear from divinity, no matter how you conceptualize it. A god neither dishes out punishment nor bestows reward. Otherwise it wouldn't be blessed and incorruptible. From my perspective, that applies equally to Zeus, Jupiter, Odin, Ganesh, Yahweh, or any of the other varieties of god humans have come up

with.