

Epicurus, gods and God

Post by "Cassius" of October 15, 2019 at 6:16 PM

In fact, Godfrey, your discussion is really advancing my thought on this. Hopefully we will one day develop some kind of "course" or discussion on Epicurean "theology" and I just realized that the opening section of that should probably not be devoted to the statements of Epicurus on the gods or to the Epicurean section from on "On the Nature of the Gods" but probably to this On Methods of Inference. If we don't first fix people's minds on the issue that Epicurus was dealing with the issue of how to think about something on which there is not a lot of "direct evidence" -- on the issue of how to deal with things that we cannot ourselves see -- then we may never be able to break through the conventional religious perspective to entertain that Epicurus had good reasons for what he was saying.

Much like the "size of the sun" issue -- it is ridiculous ever to simply say "Epicurus was wrong about the size of the sun" without explaining in the same conversation what the issues were that he confronted from competing positions, what evidence he enlisted in support of his conclusion, how he also maintained that alternative explanations which are possible should not be eliminated, and how he got right the issue that was probably more important - that the Earth is not the center of the universe. And in my reading of the details of what is left on that controversy, it is not even clear to me that Epicurus took a firm position on the measurement of the sun - the record I have seen is that Epicurus said that the sun was something like "more or less what it appears to be" and that in itself can be interpreted in varying ways. The bottom line is that it always irks me when people who are supposedly giving a neutral or even sympathetic portrayal of Epicurus cannot point out that the arguments against him may not be all that they appear to be.