

Epicurus, gods and God

Post by "Godfrey" of October 16, 2019 at 2:52 PM

According to DeWitt, Epicurus never described the gods as "immortal" but as "incorruptible". He goes on to say:

"The reasoning behind this doctrine of incorruptibility is readily discerned. From the doctrine that nothing exists except atoms and void it follows that the bodies of the gods must be corporeal. Gods are zoa, "animate beings." They are thus units in the ascending order of Nature, as is man. Being in this order and corporeal, they cannot be deathless. If deathlessness were inherent in their nature, they would be in another class by themselves. Since they do belong in the same class as man, it is a logical necessity to think of their incorruptibility as by some means preserved. Since in the cosmos of Epicurus, unlike that of Plato, this incorruptibility lacked a superior being to guarantee its continuance, the sole possibility was that the gods preserved it for themselves by their own vigilance. Thus it must be discerned that just as the happiness of man is self-achieved, so the happiness of the gods is self-preserved."

This brings to mind images of animals wandering the savanna, nomadic tribes, space opera. Also images such as "two faces or a vase?" or "young lady or witch?"



Like many innovations of Epicurus, understanding his take on the gods involves a new way of seeing. Personally, I feel like I just got a new pair of glasses and am still tripping when I descend a staircase.