

Long and Sedley, Hellenistic Philosophers, "Gods"

Post by "Cassius" of November 26, 2020 at 7:48 AM

OK I am at a stopping point for the moment but I want to conclude by agreeing with this paragraph from Jackson in most respects, except for the implication of the part underlined in red. I don't think the Epicureans thought that the the gods were real because it was important to think of them that way, I think the Epicureans thought the gods were real, and that it is important to think of them as real, because of the various arguments that they made in favor

Conclusion

Despite Epicurean resistance to orthodoxy, and indeed despite their own unorthodox beliefs, Epicureans were not atheists on the modern sense of the word. They believed in gods, presented evidence for their existence, described their nature, homes, and their lives. And these gods were considered to be real, living beings rather than as figments of the imagination, so important were they to Epicureans and their own individual journeys towards tranquillity and happiness. Indeed, so pious were the Epicureans that, beyond a philosophy, Epicureanism might perhaps be regarded as a religion in its own right.

With the caveat that the word "religion" is so polluted by connotations as to be almost useless, I do also agree with the observations that the Epicureans saw their philosophy not as anti-religion but as a purification of religion, purged of its absurdities.