

# Reverence and Awe In Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Don" of December 24, 2020 at 11:29 AM

[Matt](#) I think I see where you're coming from, but I had to react to your quote here:

## [Quote from Matt](#)

In my opinion, a person accepting Epicurus and his theology is someone who is no longer seeking mysticism and is entirely comfortable with not really discussing the gods in any meaningful way.

I would probably agree with the first part. We aren't asked to become one with the Divine as in some forms of mysticism, but Epicurus and other texts do call us to emulate or even "imitate" (e.g., in *On Piety*) the gods. I'm still not sure what to do with that, although it seems I should continue to understand its significance. Which brings me to your second point.

The "not really discussing the gods in any meaningful way" point though strikes me as missing an opportunity in Epicurus's thought. The gods/divinity/theos was obviously a paramount concern of Epicurus. It's in the first Principal Truth. It's right at the start of the Letter to Menoikeus. Epicurus, the founders, Philodemus (or possibly Phaedrus) who wrote *On Piety*, etc., all wrote entire treatises on the right relation to and conception of the gods. The gods or divinity or "that which is blessed and imperishable" were obviously of grave concern to the classical Epicureans, and I maintain it behooves us to understand why. As modern people with a secular, scientific mindset, many of us (myself included) often disregard religious "superstition" or "mysticism", and Lucretius certainly lambasted *religio* as a source of evil. But, if we "sweep" the gods under the rug within Epicureanism, we run the risk of becoming cafeteria Epicureans, picking and choosing the tasty morsels only without understanding the work that went into the meal. Okay, I admit that I belabored that analogy to the breaking point 😊 And some may say "I'm just choosing and avoiding." But I think we run the risk of the modern Stoics when they sweep the quasi-religious Logos under the rug as almost an embarrassment. When someone brings it up, they obfuscate and rationalize and re-interpret the Logos away. I am coming to believe that Epicurus and the founders had a much more nuanced, complex, and sophisticated notion of the "divine" than the Stoics or other contemporaries had. A notion that wouldn't necessarily have to be shut up in a drawer or swept under the rug. That's "coming to believe" btw; I'm not there yet.

All that being said, I wasn't around when you were active before, and I welcome your perspective and participation! It's a pleasure to virtually meet you 😊