

Are The Gods Part of Orienting Our Minds Toward What Is Important?

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Think for a minute about all the specific types of beauty that there is all around us in the world, from sunsets to all sorts of natural and man-made beauty. Then think for a moment about all the specific examples of nastiness, ugliness, death and destruction. What is it *within ourselves* that tells us on which of these two sets of pictures we should focus, which of these two is of importance and on which we should spend our time? And while you're thinking about that question, think about this from the opening of Lucretius Book 6:

"Now unless you drive from your mind with loathing all these things, and banish far from you all belief in things degrading to the gods and inconsistent with their peace, then often will the holy deities of the gods, having their majesty lessened by you, do you hurt; not that the supreme power of the gods can be so outraged that in their wrath they shall resolve to exact sharp vengeance, but because you will fancy to yourself that they, though they enjoy quiet and calm peace, do roll great billows of wrath; nor will you approach the sanctuaries of the gods with a calm breast, nor will you be able with tranquil peace of mind to take in those idols which are carried from their holy body into the minds of men as heralds of their divine form. And what kind of life follows after this, may be conceived."

Is there not a relationship between (1) how we orient our minds to judge the things around us and (2) what we think are the ultimate highest forms of life to which living beings can attain? And is it not important for us to affirm that we have clear and specific knowledge of the heights to which we can and should aspire?

