

Epicureans and the Ancient Greek Gods (Imagery of "Gods" / "Gods Among Men")

Post by "Cassius" of February 19, 2019 at 5:10 PM

Ha! I bet you expect I will object to that Matthaesus!

First, unless I misunderstand what you are saying (possible, as I am reading during a class) you are advocating the stoic model of "nature as deity." I feel sure Epicurus would object to that, because he believed he had established real living intelligent beings with deathlessness and blissfulness, first of all.

Second, I think it is the wrong direction even to discuss "idealized deities" with the emphasis on the "idealized" as the problem. Epicurus was theorizing as to actual attributes of actual beings which are a part of nature, and the term "idealized" is fraught with danger as inconsistent with that approach.

And yep "Basically Providence in this scheme is the observable fact that that we have cosmic order that is conducive to life and self reflection as opposed to undefined molecular chaos swirling in the void" I think Epicurus would object to the word "order" to the extent that that implies that there is an outside force organizing the matter which organizes by its own properties into the life and other bodies that we see and experience.

At risk of being too random I want to paste the following here, because I think it relates directly to this discussion in terms of the causation issues, as it shows how Cicero describes his main objection to Epicurean physics:

"Still, there is a great deal in each of them (Epicurus and Democritus) with which I do not agree, and especially this: in the study of Nature there are two questions to be asked, first, what is the matter out of which each thing is made, second, what is the force by which it is made; now Democritus and Epicurus have discussed the question of matter, but they have not considered the question of force or the efficient cause."

Same issue, stated another way by Cicero: "The swerving is itself an arbitrary fiction; for Epicurus says the atoms swerve without a cause, — yet this is the capital offense in a natural philosopher, to speak of something taking place uncaused."

And one more major physics objection by Cicero: Irrelevant to us today, or important to refute? "It is also unworthy of a natural philosopher to deny the infinite divisibility of matter; an error that assuredly Epicurus would have avoided, if he had been willing to let his friend Polyaenus teach him geometry instead of making Polyaenus himself unlearn it."