

Pros and Cons Of Considering Epicurean Philosophy To Be A "Religion"

Post by "Cassius" of January 22, 2024 at 7:36 PM

Part of the clarity that needs to be brought to the discussion is "What is it that Epicurus is saying to reverence?" All the letter to Menoecus says is "immortal and blessed." Immortal is relatively clear (deathless) but the meaning of "blessedness" is what has to be explained and visualized. Only then can you make progress in understanding what it is you are having reverence toward.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

First of all believe that god is a being immortal and blessed, even as the common idea of a god is engraved on men's minds, and do not assign to him anything alien to his immortality or ill-suited to his blessedness: but believe about him everything that can uphold his blessedness and immortality.

And as to the blessed existence one of the most detailed statements is from Torquatus:

Quote

[40] XII. Again, the truth that pleasure is the supreme good can be most easily apprehended from the following consideration. Let us imagine an individual in the enjoyment of pleasures great, numerous and constant, both mental and bodily, with no pain to thwart or threaten them; I ask what circumstances can we describe as more excellent than these or more desirable? A man whose circumstances are such must needs possess, as well as other things, a robust mind subject to no fear of death or pain, because death is apart from sensation, and pain when lasting is usually slight, when oppressive is of short duration, so that its temporariness reconciles us to its intensity, and its slightness to its continuance.

[41] When in addition we suppose that such a man is in no awe of the influence of the gods, and does not allow his past pleasures to slip away, but takes delight in constantly recalling them, what circumstance is it possible to add to these, to make his condition better?

So to me you end up with piety toward the "idea" of this kind of existence in general, more so than to Zeus or any other specific alleged example of it. The question of whether an individual entity qualifies as divine is always going to be a question of fact that depends on

circumstances, but the "preconception" of divinity is something that comes before its application to any particular individual.