

Looking for constructive feedback on my mostly Epicurean philosophy of life

Post by "Eikadistes" of September 18, 2024 at 12:04 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

don't necessarily want to derail *this* thread with another discussion with fine points on "the gods," but is it your view at this point that you do not think Epicurus held the gods to have any physical existence whatsoever ("*...though, those deities are simply inspiring mental objects*") or am I misreading your intent there?

I shouldn't say "*simply*" because our discussions have revealed that the topic of Epicurean theology is anything but *simple*. Perhaps "*primarily*", "*most immediately*", or "*at least*" would be better. *At least*, I consider the "divine nature" to be a mental construct that provides humans with ethical utility. Therein, one's "god" is, and the collection of human "gods" are, *at least*, personal expressions of the common notion of divinity that almost all human beings seem to share.

Do these conceptions of divinity correspond with non-terrestrial, quasi-animals that dwell in the void between world systems, whose non-compound bodies respire with quasi-blood? *Perhaps*. But even if a human being could triangulate the position of a god in space, by definition, the god would be too well hidden or protected or discrete to allow itself to be discovered, or examined like a specimen. So, those gods, as "*extraordinary extra-terrestrials*", are somewhat theoretical.

Indeed, Epicureans spent a lot of time contemplating the various ways in which the universe could contain a being that is both "alive" yet "immortal". The Kathegemones dedicated treatises to the topic, so I hesitate to dismiss it solely on the argument that: (1) compounds cannot be immortal, (2) all living beings are compounds, (3) "the gods" are living beings, (4) "the gods" cannot be immortal. Ancient Epicureans seemed to have had a lot more to say about *this* than *just that*.

I'm not sure exactly how to deal with that. I wish we had more extant texts.

But the icons in ancient peoples' dreams that some have called "gods", are, *at least*, immediate, concrete, reproducible, inspiring, and we can discuss them in meaningful ways with sensuous vocabulary. The thought of a divine being stimulates a positive mental response the same way that a massage stimulates positive sensations in one's nerves. We observe this sort of internal stimulation in people across the world, and we have been making this observation since before written history. If we want to meaningfully discuss "the gods", we can, *at least*, start there.