

Epicureanism as the spiritual essence or 'religion' of an entire community

Post by “Cassius” of March 27, 2025 at 1:35 PM

I think Eikadistes' views here are correct, but I also think that Kalosyni's concerns should alert us that there's a regularly-occurring problem that we have to work on ways to address.

Many of the words we're talking about, including "religion," have many shades of meaning, some of which are reconcilable with core Epicurean views and some of which are not.

I suspect that if Kalosyni were to bore in and specifically question what it means to "pray" or "participate in the ceremonies" then we could reconcile most of the apparent contradictions in a way that would be consistent with core Epicurean views against the existence of supernatural forces.

It seems to me that the ground rule for the best way to deal with these ambiguities is a lot like Epicurus said about gods: Believe X, Y, and Z about gods, and never believe anything that it is inconsistent with X, Y, and Z.

It's probably not enough for us today to simply say "Epicurus taught that there are no supernatural forces" and therefore "never accept that Epicurus would teach anything that would imply the existence of supernatural forces." But that's the kind of hard logical chain reasoning approach that I think Epicurus was teaching when he was alive, and that we need to use to understand him now.

So anytime someone suggests an interpretation of any text that implies that the text contradicts Epicurus, the first step to address it should be to focus on looking for a way to interpret the words being used in a way that is consistent with core ideas. Only after that would I entertain the possibility that there might be some disagreement.

So far I personally don't see anything that can't be reconciled by cutting out any supernatural connotation from what's being discussed.