

# Must an Epicurean believe in gods?

Post by "Cassius" of April 15, 2025 at 9:18 PM

I want to add a comment based on my latest thoughts after reading Matthew Stewart's "Natures' God...."

I think the "Deists" and their associates made a major mistake in abandoning Epicurus' views of the nature of gods into a sort of "nature is god" pantheism. If Stewart is correct and I am reading Stewart correctly most of them decided essentially either that there was too much pressure from religion, or the masses of people are too stupid, to take any other position, so they played a game of obfuscation and decided to retreat from the confrontation with supernaturalism by going all in on "the god of nature."

I find it very interesting that as part of that period, however, many of the people who were working on finding a way to fight back against religion also found Epicurus' theory of life throughout the universe as very significant to their thinking.

To the question "Must an Epicurean believe in gods?" nobody really has the right to say "yes" other than as part of stating their own opinion. There's certainly no rule to that effect in order to post to Epicureanfriends.com. If someone in the future sets up other organizations for other purposes, that's something that they would have to decide.

However on the core point that "there are no supernatural gods" or supernatural forces of any kind, I think most of us agree that that is such a core part of Epicurean philosophy that it would be absurd to divorce that from the rest of the philosophy.

Even specifying the term "non-interventional" doesn't go nearly far enough to avoid what I am characterizing as the mistake of the Deists. There are too many other attributes that people associate with gods that also have to be eliminated.

At present and with the limited texts that we have it's just not possible to be certain exactly what Epicurus taught positively about gods except that they are not supernatural in any way. While it's a certainty in Epicurean philosophy that there is life elsewhere in the infinite and eternal universe, and it seems likewise a certainty that we as humans are NOT the best and the brightest, what's really necessary is to stamp out every implication of supernaturalism in discussing what those beings might be like.

So the "stamping out every implication of supernaturalism" is what I see as the essential part of Epicurean theory of gods, and any wavering on that issue is where I would draw the line of considering someone thoroughly Epicurean. Most all the rest is just a matter of applying reasonable projection to the possibilities that do exist in an infinite and eternal natural universe, and how far one wants to go in that direction is largely a matter of personal disposition.