

Must an Epicurean believe in gods?

Post by "Cassius" of April 15, 2025 at 9:31 PM

Oh one more thing deriving from my Stewart reasoning. The idea of the possible existence of supernatural gods seems to be tied in most people's minds to the possibility of the soul surviving death. Even as the Deists were proclaiming freedom from religion they were undercutting their own positions by continuing to talk about the possibility that there might be a life after death.

As I see it, the possibility of an afterlife is about as opposite to the views of Epicurus as anything can be. The Deists seemed to want to entertain the possibility that their "natural god" might somehow have a mechanism to also allow life after death. Maybe they felt like they had to do so for political or survival reasons, and maybe what they did was reasonable under their circumstances, but I think it led to very bad results, and essentially helped with those who wanted to keep the discussion of Epicurus under a tight lid.

Any kind of position that allows for the possibility of life after death, or supernatural forces of any kind, is going to lead to the kind of murkiness and ambiguity that ultimately led to the shortcomings of Deism. To the extent that that kind of thinking hangs around even today, in my view it cannot be reconciled with Epicurean philosophy and needs to be clearly stated to be incompatible with it.