

Why Epicurus Railed Against Atheists And Questioned Their Sanity

Post by "Eikadistes" of January 7, 2026 at 12:13 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

And if they are insane, in what constitutes sanity?

From my readings, I interpret this: "insanity" is the *rejection of reality*, and "sanity" is *observance of reality*. An "insane" person is full of *pseudodoxies*, false beliefs and opinions. A "sane" person makes "true" statements which properly correspond with the physical reality around them.

One such physical reality in post-Alexandrian Greece was the exchange of foreign forms of piety, and the need to explain the existence of these foreign, yet recognizably spiritual institutions. Surely *something* natural exists at the source of this seemingly-universal sense of piety.

Epíkouros calls this *the divine nature*. (Whether or not that corresponds with theoretical super-humans is up to you, **but at least this much is true**: a natural phenomena is responsible for the evolution of religion). Philódēmos records this as something like *visions during dreams*.

I *believe* that Epicureans dismissed atheists as being "insane" because they interpret atheists to be "rejecting the existence of the naturally-occurring, universal, awe-inspiring dream visions", as well as "reducing the practice of piety to a delusional narrative that has no basis in physics."

In that regard, I think he is making more of an anthropological observation than a theological proposition. I ... wonder if it is possible that they were, sort of, talking *passed* each other? They were both anti-creationist, anti-interventionist, anti-superstition, anti-metaphysics, etc.

I get the feeling that ancient atheists didn't buy into Epíkouros' definition of "the gods". I think, maybe, the interpretation of Epicurean Philosophy by ancient atheists was similar to ancient Christians: 'god must be seen as a supernatural super-being' is what they're observing.