

Epicurus, gods and God

Post by "Cassius" of October 13, 2019 at 5:15 PM

Godfrey if you read any of my past commentary on this you probably will expect that I am someone who thinks that the Epicurean theory of divinity has important practical uses even today. My position is grounded on a number of different issues, some of which I will probably forget to list here, but mainly being (1) the desire to come up with a comprehensive theory of humanity's place in the universe (if we alone, then there is something special about us), (2) the desire to consistently apply our theory of observation on the widest possible scale (the isonomia issue - which is closely related to "nature never produces only a single thing of a kind, and also the issue of anticipating that life exists on a spectrum from low to high.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Community, shared belief, safety.... He says that there is an anticipation of the gods; could this be simply awe and reverence for the universe we live in?

I do not think that the issue is strictly related to "reverence for the universe" which is after all "just" a combination of matter and void, like we are. I think the issue more relates to reverence for "life" or even "pleasure" as for example considering pleasure to be a goddess (Venus). For example, why NOT live in a cave eating grain and scratch stick men on walls, if indeed we can fill our experience with simple physical pleasures, rather than worry about pleasures that are more mental? There is something going on in the minds of higher animals that causes them to work to improve their ability to experience pleasure and avoid pain, and even among humans there is a wide variety of patterns as to how to approach that issue ("progress"). Where does this come from? Religionists will suggest gods or ideal forms, but that's clearly not the answer, nor is it "random" - so a coherent explanation of why civilization life has (to some extent) "improved" over time that does not involve supernatural gods would be a logical question for a philosopher to consider.

I tend to take Epicurus exactly at his word, and to discount explanations that suggest that he was scared of hemlock or the like (I agree with Nate's comments above on this).

It seems to me that some people just don't seem to be concerned, especially nowadays, about issues of "who created the universe" and "why" and so forth. But I tend to think personally that that number of people, even today, is really smaller than some of us in the highly developed nations might think. I think those are compelling questions which demand a coherent explanation, and "I don't know" just isn't good enough.