

Epicurus, gods and God

Post by "Joshua" of October 16, 2019 at 2:16 PM

In the main I don't think I find fault with those objections, Hiram; and at any rate, the value in such beings is not in their *being*, per se, but in the human frame of mind that *allows* for their being.

I, like Godfrey, am an atheist as I understand the term. I deny the existence of the God of theism, since by definition that God is creative and *supernatural* (an impossibility), intercessory (a contradiction with lived experience), and revelatory (a gross offense against the intellect of the common man).

And what is the desirable frame of mind I mention above? Simply this;

1. An alert and healthy sense of perspective.

While it is mean and petty and narcissistic to suppose oneself the exclusive beneficiary of divine revelation, and to announce oneself thereby as the inheritor and disposer of creation, it is cautious and magnanimous to imagine a rung of natural intelligence still higher up the ladder. Compare the Hymn to Venus in Lucretius with the following verse in Psalms; "The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's; But the earth He has given to the children of men." And behold whither this leads, in the following contemptible utterance of Anne Coulter; "God gave us the earth. We have dominion over the plants, the animals, the trees. God said, 'Earth is yours. Take it. Rape it. It's yours.'" Well, the earth is not ours. It was here for billions of years before our ancestors, and others will inhabit it for aeons after the last of our kind has died. We should not be nihilists, forever moaning the smallness of man in the dead emptiness of space. Neither should we be megalomaniacs.

2. A becoming and genuine intellectual modesty.

This is a related problem, and finds its distinction in the difference between Pyrrho and all Prophets. One claimed to know nothing; the other, to know everything. They were both playing false.

3. A reverence for life and its contingencies.

This goes a long way toward explaining why Epicurus attended the sacred rites. To express gratitude to Demeter is not to grant any meaning to the silly and fatuous myths that surround her; it is merely to recognize that our own common social existence depends upon the fecundity of Nature. As for the attendant virtue of civility, it is expressed best by Christopher Hitchens; "When I go into a Mosque, I take off my shoes. When I go into a Synagogue, I cover my head."

And why is this frame of mind desirable? Because it encapsulates the spirit of inquiry that is best able to delve into the nature of physics and ethics, as typified by the figure of Epicurus. That spirit of inquiry is essential to probing the nature of the good (pleasure), and the foundation of human happiness.