

On the nature of a god

Post by "Cassius" of November 2, 2019 at 11:31 AM

Good to hear from you Michael! Couple of comments:

[Quote from Michael](#)

After all, the gods in Epicureanism were formally mortal or at least descend from them.

I don't say this to disagree, necessarily, but I don't think this is necessarily supported by the texts either explicitly or inferentially. The texts seem clear about the origin of life on earth, but I am not sure that that necessarily translates into the origin of "the gods" in "the intermundia." I don't have a proposed explanation but I think the first step in being clear in tracking down Epicurus is to be sure not to bring our own conventional dispositions to the game. If the universe is indeed eternally old as Epicurus said, then I am thinking that it is going to be incorrect to think that there would be a "first" to a natural process, except within a limited scope of observation. "First on Earth" makes sense, but does "first in eternity?"

[Quote from Michael](#)

use in worshiping them

As you point out the definition of "worship" is going to be the key. I get the impression from most all of the texts that the Epicurean attitude is one of "admiration" as much as anything else, but more like we would admire someone who is a paragon of excellence in their field, rather than someone we would fall down before and "worship" as you and I probably think of it.

[Quote from Michael](#)

should be called "gods" and not blissful, immortal space aliens

Yep the terminology issue is always there with us. I am not fluent enough with the Greek to have much insight into the precise words that were chosen, or what they meant to the ancient Epicureans. The Greek concepts of "gods" is probably about as foreign to us today as is the Epicurean concept of gods, so maybe we need to look at it from that point of view, since we really aren't completely comfortable calling Athena or Zeus "gods" either from our modern point of view, but yet we're pretty much used to putting aside our terminology objections in relation to the Roman and Greek gods.