

Discussion of the Society of Epicurus' 20 Tenets of 12/21/19

Post by "Hiram" of January 5, 2020 at 10:53 AM

[Quote from Oscar](#)

Hiram, can you please reference where you found those atheist, idealist and realist interpretations? Are these your own interpretations? Are you simply referring to Epicurus' description of the god(s) and working your way out from there?

I think your realism is actually the "idealistic" interpretation; to claim the gods are *blissful* extraterrestrial immortals made of particles is indeed an extraordinary claim that requires extraordinary evidence. How do you know that they're immortal? I suppose if they are made up of particles, perhaps they are also subject to particle disturbance and dissolution?

I don't think realists portray god(s) with adopting a **mystical idealism** per the saying "blissful extraterrestrial immortals made of particles".

Lastly, I don't think the atheist interpretation, in its most literal sense, is an acceptable position -- even Professor Richard Dawkins states, when pressed, to be agnostic. There's simply no convincing evidence supporting any personal god(s).

They're not my own. The first two are the widely accepted academic interpretations. For instance, if you look up the wikipedia article on Epicureanism it says:

The manner in which the [Epicurean gods](#) exist is still disputed. Some scholars say that Epicureanism believes that the gods exist outside the mind as material objects (the realist position), while others assert that the gods only exist in our minds as ideals (the idealist position)

This is followed by three sources, which are:

1. O'Keefe, Tim (2010). *Epicureanism*. University of California Press. pp. 155-156.
2. ^ [Jump up to:a b c d e](#) Sedley, David (2011). "Epicurus' theological innatism". In Fish, Jeffrey; Sanders, Kirk R. (eds.). *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. pp. 29-30.
3. ^ [Jump up to:a b c d](#) Konstan, David (2011). "Epicurus on the gods". In Fish, Jeffrey; Sanders, Kirk R. (eds.). *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. pp. 53-54.

So as you see this is a very complex subject, and I believe it's tied mainly to the problem of how much can we infer about life in other worlds based on what we see about life in this world (this is treated in "On methods of inference" by Philodemus); and it's also linked to the problem of the Canon and the requirement that it be based on EMPIRICAL data from nature. It seems like some ancient Epicureans argued that the gods could be "perceived" as anticipations, but this is very problematic. Therefore I adhere to [the third / atheistic interpretation](#).

I find it possible that in the ecology of the cosmos there may exist super-intelligent, super-blissful beings; and I find it possible that they may exist for thousands of years, but I find it impossible (it doesn't pass the test of conceivability, which is an important criterion cited in "On methods of inference") that beings of any species would last an eternal lifetime when all else goes to dust, as we see in nature, even suns and planets.

Here is a piece by Ilkka on the subject, where he also articulates the third view (the atheist view). He was the first one who initially posited this view in terms of the canon, so it would be unfair to attribute it to me although I adhere to it. He argues that the [Epicurean gods](#) do not pass the test of the canon, that they are unempirical.

<https://menoceus.blogspot.com/2014/08/epicurean-gods.html>

Also, we have discussed this in the past among us. Here are records of our previous discussions. Feel free to start discussions elsewhere or here based on passages from these previous discussions.

Dialogues on the [Epicurean Gods](#) -
<http://societyofepicurus.com/dialogues-on-the-epicurean-gods/>

“For there ARE Gods ...” -
<http://societyofepicurus.com/for-there-are-gods/>