

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

Post by "Cassius" of January 9, 2020 at 8:38 AM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

So far, Elayne 's reply makes more sense to me.

You may mean more than what I am about to comment on, but for the moment I am presuming that you mean that it makes sense to you that he is referring to aliens on another planet.

I think that is probably going in the right direction, but also I think it's important to note the detail that is surviving even though so much is lost. The description of the gods as sort of like flowing atoms, and living in the "intermundia" (presumably between worlds rather than on a particular world) indicates a pretty advanced level of speculation as to them having a quasi-physical nature instead of just the standard Martians that people traditionally think about.

And consistent with a recent theme I have been pursuing I think it's important not to reduce this too much to being just another speculation like about a plant or an animal living deep under the sea, or just something like that that seems strange to us but of very little relevance to our own lives. I think that Epicurus thought that a proper understanding of gods is very relevant to the lives of *most* people. (OK I will exclude *Elayne* from most people 😊 - joke!)

Pretty clearly from Velleius in *On the Nature of the Gods*, we're talking about attributes that are logical deductions (such as what the gods speak), and their perfect bliss seems to be as much of a logical construction too as it is as specific scientific speculation about what they eat or drink or breath or exactly what it is that they are doing that they enjoy so much that they want to spend an endless life doing it.

The point I am making not so well here is that if we reduce the gods to some form of aliens and put them on the shelf along with "those things we expect to see when we pursue space travel" then I do think we will miss important aspects of what Epicurus was talking about. Sort of like infinity and eternity, I think Epicurus was saying that there is much to be gained by regularly exercising the mind on subjects that help us remain attached to our place in the universe and our goals for what to do when alive.

And of course that's probably related directly to *this* observation, which I probably should have made more of a highlight of my discussion about the Epicurean view of gods. I don't think that Epicurus came up with his theory of the gods *because* of this observation, but there's no doubt in my mind that this is a reason why he thought the theory was important:

VS32. The veneration of the wise man is a great blessing to those who venerate him.

.... which probably goes along with the observation (I think recorded in Seneca) that the Epicureans used the phrase:

"Do all things as if Epicurus were watching."

For purposes of this discussion I'll consider the Christians to be plagiarists who say "**What Would Jesus Do?**" 😊 But likely the same principle of human psychology is involved. It helps to visualize goals if we want to achieve them. Which to repeat one more time, would **not** have been sufficient for Epicurus to invent the theory as some kind of "golden myth" if he didn't actually think that it made sense and was consistent with observation.