

Mako's Epicurean Outline

Post by "Hiram" of January 22, 2018 at 11:16 AM

[Quote from Mako](#)

The gods are immortal beings that are imperceptible to us. (**)

(**) My confusion shows here. Epicurus denied the existence of a God, but I thought I recall him also saying they exist, but are not as man believes them to be. They immortal and happy, the model that we seek to follow by living a pleasurable life. Was Epicurus using the word "God" to demonstrate this, but not actually claiming there were heavenly figures above us?

I don't recall Epicurean sources saying that the gods are imperceptible, as this would make the entire system fall: our philosophy is based on the study of nature, ergo SOME form of perception must be possible.

There are three interpretation of the gods.

The realist interpretation of the gods says their bodies are atomic and they are real animals living in intermundia. It seems like the "anticipations" are supposed to be the way we perceive them (with the mind) according to the realist view, but I personally reject this: anticipations only happen AFTER you have perceived something once, and then the imprint becomes familiar. Others may say via dreams we may receive particles from the gods, sort of the same way that neutrinos and other galactic particles travel through our bodies daily without our knowing. Others may argue that the gods are not directly perceived, but are inferred from the doctrine of innumerable worlds, which posits that life exists throughout the universe and there's no reason to think we are the apex of life forms; so gods are those animals that are vastly superior to us in the ecology of the universe.

The idealist interpretation says they are cultural and mental constructs meant for contemplation, but not physically real. The atheistic interpretation is that this is an obsolete teaching and that religious pleasure may be natural, but it's unnecessary.

All options are explored here: <http://societyofepicurus.com/for-there-are-gods/>

The goal of religious piety is to experience "pure, unalloyed pleasure", as per Philodemus' scroll "On Piety", a commentary on which can be found on the SoFE webpage. So that is the key point to take away: if you're going to engage in religious practices, make sure to study that in order to protect your experience and maximize the benefit.

The third interpretation (which I and Ilkka endorse most vocally) is explained here: <https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/2014/10/15/the...epicurean-gods/>