

Episode Two - The Achievement of Epicurus

Post by "Joshua" of October 3, 2020 at 8:57 PM

Quote

I found it interesting to look up the Latin for exactly what is being condemned, variously translated as Superstition, or Religion. It is actually "religio" which Martin Furguson Smith annotates as:

"false religion," not "religion,"... The Epicureans were opposed not to religion, but to the traditional religion which taught that the gods govern the world."

I believe that's from the Loeb edition?

I think there is strong tendency to put the cart before the horse with that word. Whether *religio* should be translated as *religion* or *superstition* is of secondary concern. What Lucretius meant for us, his readers, to actually **understand** by *religio*, he laid out for us in the surrounding lines and with the story of Iphigenia.

Religio is believing that:

- Humans are hemmed in, above and below,
- In a specially created world
- By supernatural, intervening gods,
- (And their oracles and priests),
- Whose natures are threatening and capricious, and
- Whose ultimate power is to torment us beyond the grave.

To follow Epicurus is to believe that:

- We are free agents,
- In one natural world among innumerable worlds
- (Where the gods, if they exist, do not create or intervene),
- who ignore the priests, choosing instead the philosopher
- whose foundation is material nature and whose end is pleasure,

-and for whom death is nothing.

I probably could have made that a little smoother, but I was aiming for symmetry.