

# Reverence and Awe In Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Cassius" of October 25, 2020 at 12:03 PM

Ok we need some input from [Godfrey](#), [Don](#), and [Charles](#) , though by listing those I am not by any means looking to exclude anyone else's comment.

I am in particular thinking that there are many text references in Lucretius, one of which we touched on briefly in the podcast today, which can be read substantially along the direction Susan is going, which always strictly conforming to the limitations that Elayne is stressing.

I am particularly thinking too that we ought to systematically go through some of those texts before any of us commit to strongly to a particular conclusion about any of this.

I know that probably the majority of the instances we need to review are in Lucretius, and are in the latter parts of the book, and I don't have a command of them. Failing that, I am thinking

**E**PICURUS approached the topic of piety as a reformer, a materialist, and a dogmatist.

As a reformer he believed that the natural piety of mankind had suffered perversion and that his mission was to recall men to true piety.

As a materialist he rejected belief in all incorporeal existences. This resulted after his death in the discovery of a new category, "spiritual beings."

As a materialist he felt bound also to reject all divine causation, including divine movers and divine creators. He was an evolutionist, postulating the continuous birth of the unintended.

As a dogmatist, declaring the possibility of certitude in knowledge, he felt bound to furnish a rationalized account of the gods, their numbers, attributes, form, abode, and manner of life.

The new theology that resulted is astonishing. Some of the findings

All of which so far I think is absolutely accurate: Epicurus held that gods do exist, but they are not supernatural. That starting premise can't be violated in anything we conclude from here.

Then he goes further in ways that I expect Susan would approve:

## EPICURUS AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

Between men and gods there is a physical, a psychological, and an ethical nexus. Both are animate creatures in an ascending scale of existence. This is the physical nexus. The idea of god is prenatal in man, a built-in notion, implanted by Nature in man as a Prolepsis or Anticipation of experience. This is the psychological nexus. Just as the happiness of men must be self-achieved, so the happiness of gods must be self-preserved. This is the ethical nexus.

Freedom to preserve happiness is no less necessary for gods than freedom to achieve happiness is necessary for men. The gods must be free from onerous responsibilities. Consequently there is no divine government for the universe, no divine providence for man, and no prophecy.

Strange as these doctrines may seem, they were combined with definite previews of Christianity. The idea of love between man and God would not have seemed a novelty to Epicureans. They were taught "that the gods were friends of the wise and the wise were friends of the gods." Friendship and love were one for the Greeks, though denoted by different words in Latin and English.

Neither would "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" have seemed to be an innovation. Epicureans were taught that the images of the gods float down into the receptive minds of the truly pious.

And since I have high confidence in DeWitt's research and understanding of Epicurus, I have to give these things credit as well.

From here we have to attack the details.