

About This Subforum - Everyone Please Read!

Post by “Cassius” of October 28, 2020 at 7:24 AM

Epicurean Divinity is a huge topic, especially because it differs in so many interesting ways from the theologies of mainstream organized religion, or the state-sponsored religion of Epicurus' own time. Unfortunately, very little of the original writings on the subject have survived; however, from secondary period sources referring directly to the original teachings, we can still glean a great deal about the original doctrines of the Epicurean School of Philosophy. For those to whom these teachings prove personally appealing, we can even examine ways in which Epicurean views of divinity may be applied today.

This forum includes several main sections. The first, “Relevant Texts”, gathers together the textual source material pertaining to Epicurean theology, while the second consists of the sub-topics. Areas for exploration and discussion. include Epicurean Piety, Images of the Gods, Anticipations of the Gods, The Material Nature of the Gods, The Origin, Life, and Potential Death of the Gods, The Relationship of Non-Intervention Between Gods and Humans, and The Appearance of the Gods.

Threads on these topics or similar can be created by users as their pleasure prompts them. Links can be created referring to the source material to support ideas expressed.

As we proceed here we need to go forward with some procedural standards to apply when evaluating the texts on statements about the gods. These should be:

1) Epicurus' own words take precedence over all other source material. Anywhere Epicurus leaves room for different interpretations is not narrowed down by commentary from other sources, such as Philodemus or DeWitt. Neither will individual quotes be taken out of context with his whole body of work.

2) The process of determining what is real takes precedence over details of prior or current conclusions. When new data is available that Epicurus didn't have, we agree to present both what he concluded based on information available to him _and_ revisions which are necessary to continue adhering to his process of observing nature and trusting the senses. We agree that such revisions are an embedded expectation in a philosophy based on observations of nature, and that to ignore new data is to distort Epicurus' intentions beyond recognition.

3) Prolepses are subject to the same verification process as any other sense data and are not to be given special status when the combined sense evidence contradicts them, no matter how compelling they are. We will not say prolepses are infallible when the content is in the form of a conclusion about reality. This is the same as we do not say a straw in a glass of water is bent because it looks to be so from one view. Instead, we examine it from different positions and touch it. We combine our senses to test any conclusion. A sensation about gods from an

intuition or dream is not a mistake in the same way seeing an optical illusion is not a mistake, but assumptions about the cause of those intuitions and dreams is a matter up for verification by the other senses. We must especially beware of making assertions of material fact on grounds that we received special knowledge due to a prepared mind, because this closes off the importance of examination by the senses.

(Note: The above "standards of interpretation" was added here October 28, 2020. It is subject to revision as we proceed, and will likely be added to the forum as a whole along with the "Not Neo-Epicurean But Epicurean" statement as we have more experience with it.)