

Simulacra, gods and the dead

Post by "Cassius" of November 14, 2020 at 12:22 PM

Thank you for that information on the Greek, Don.

This is one of those places where I have to watch that I don't overstate the case, but I think it is mandatory, essential, and a key to the entire philosophy that Epicurus would not allow a major premise or observation to stand contradicted by another one, and leave the contradiction unresolved. Meaning, once he concluded that the gods were of such nature that they were (1) nonsupernatural, and (2) living in perfect peace, with the implication of no favorites or enemies among humans, and (3) by their nature in the intermundia or in some other way not here on earth where their type of existence would be excluded, then I think he would rigorously maintain that everything else has to be understood in accord with those premises.

So while we always have to be careful not to take things to an extreme that the words we have won't bear, I think the key to interpretation of the other passages is to work from the beginning on what is meant by "images" and also by "anticipations" and work toward a position that is logically consistent with those earlier "physics" positions about the nature of the gods.

I think all sorts of the term "idola" or "images" or "spectres" is possible, with the main limiting factor being that Epicurus was looking to explain how things occur naturally, and that "action at a distance" can never be supernatural, so must involve the flow of something between object and observer. That leaves a huge variety of options to choose from so long as it doesn't involve supernatural universe-creating god(s), and given that I understand Plato was postulating "lesser gods" as a means of world-governing then Epicurus might have left open that there are beings who are not gods who nevertheless could (if we could prove it) be flying around the universe. Of course what I am talking about there is more on the order of "Martians" and other sci-fi material, but I also gather without wearing too much tin foil that even the current observations of UFOs might not be ridiculous to entertain.

However to bring this back to base I think a large part of what Epicurus was thinking about was the benefit of contemplating what "the best life" might entail, as a means of inspiration and aspiration and motivation, all of which are necessary at least to some degrees for some people to ward off the ultimate evil of "nihilism."