

On Deism, and Getting it Wrong

Post by “Joshua” of August 15, 2019 at 7:57 PM

I often see allusions to deism in relation to the Epicurean perspective on the gods. The connection is superficially obvious, which I suppose is why it's often made--Deists believe in God, but one that is removed from human affairs. Epicureans accepted the existence of a higher order of conscious intelligence, but considered them/it to be removed from human affairs.

But there's really a critical mistake here; the *chief feature* of the deistic god is that it is always, *always* the first cause in their cosmology. The Aristotelian Prime Mover. Deism specifically developed in order to hand-wave two problems in the observable universe; first, that there is something when there might have been nothing. Second, that the order of nature is never anything other than ordered and natural. So deism invokes the providential watchmaker; a supreme and generative intelligence that designed a stable cosmos, and then left it ticking on the bench while he stepped out for a smoke.

Deism simply *isn't* deism without an act of creation. And that's why Epicureans were not and cannot be Deists. See, Epicurus solved the two problems of *existence* and *order* more elegantly; he proposed that the cosmos was made of atoms and void, and that atoms and void are uncreated and co-eternal--from everlasting to everlasting.

The Epicurean conception of the gods is thus unique in all human thought. Most of the gods dreamt by the human mind were non-creating but constantly meddling. Some few of the gods which men have proposed were creating *and* meddling (an exceptionally bothersome lot). The prime mover of the Deists creates but does not meddle.

Only the [Epicurean gods](#) were non-creating and non-meddling.

-Joshua

Post by “Cassius” of August 15, 2019 at 8:47 PM

ABSOLUTELY!! It is amazing that so many don't seem to get this! Deist gods are just Judeo/Christian/Islamic/Abrahamic gods with a lazy streak.

[Epicurean gods](#) are absolutely not supernatural in any respect. Most people seem to have great difficulty separating "supernatural" from "gods" but once you get that straight in your mind

then I think most of the opposition to "Epicurean theology" evaporates.

Most of the rest of the opposition (besides the opinion that "gods" must be "supernatural" is the epistemological issue that since we've never seen "gods" we can't have confidence that they exist. But I think Epicurus would say "we've never seen atoms but we have confidence that THEY exist."

Once you focus on "nature never makes a single thing of a kind" and add that to "the universe is boundless in size" and "there are innumerable worlds with life" then I think Epicurus would say it's not only not a leap - it's an obvious deduction - that there must exist life forms which have evolved to the point of deathlessness and living in constant pleasure with no pains.