

Declaration Of Rights Of Epicureans To Freedom of Religion - Cassius' Declaration of August 20, 2021

Post by “Cassius” of August 20, 2021 at 2:04 PM

WHEREAS August 20, 2021, is as good a day as any other to make this declaration; and

WHEREAS it is a better day than most others of any month, because the Twentieth was designated by Epicurus himself as a special day of commemoration; and

WHEREAS it is in the world today a valuable right of the citizens of many nations to claim protected freedoms of conscience and action and other civic rights associated with the right to "freedom of religion" that many today find essential to the protection of their livelihoods and even their lives;

BE IT THEREFORE KNOWN THAT:

(1) Epicurus was the founder of one of the oldest and most respected systems of religious viewpoint as to the nature and existence of Divinity in the history of Western Civilization; and

(2) That those who follow the teachings of Epicurus hold, as much or more than those members of any group recognized as a religion, a distinct and sincerely-held religious viewpoint;

THEREFORE BE IT PROCLAIMED THAT:

Those who call themselves "Epicurean" are members of a religious tradition that deserves to hold and does hold the same legal rights and privileges as those of any religion recognized by the Constitution of the United States, by the Constitution of any State of the United States, or by the governing documents of any nation or organization of any nation or civilization on Planet Earth or on any other Planet or location elsewhere in the universe.

Cassius Amicus

August 20, 2021

Post by “Cassius” of August 20, 2021 at 2:09 PM

If I recall correct Plato himself categorized [Philebus](#)' "patron goddess" as Aphrodite / Venus, correct?

And there is ample reason from the Epicurean texts to consider the primary Epicurean divinity of note to be Venus, correct?

Are there any other contenders for the role of primary divinity in Epicurean religion?

Post by “Cassius” of August 20, 2021 at 2:11 PM

I apologize for not having taken the time for a much more elaborate declaration, but I thought if you are personally in a situation where your livelihood or your life was requiring you to affirm that you are entitled to some relief due to your claim of freedom of religion, this might be of some use for you in documenting that you are entitled to those rights as least as much as those younger and therefore less-well-established religious traditions as Christianity or Islam.

Post by “Cassius” of August 20, 2021 at 2:13 PM

Might be a good day to review what's left of "Philodemus On Piety!"

Post by “Eikadistes” of August 20, 2021 at 5:12 PM

I caution against presenting *Venus* to non-Epicureans as our go-to expression of *divinity*. I don't think that *Venus* is a *completely* inappropriate teaching tool, but using *Venus* as our prototype will inevitably lead to misinterpretation.

In accordance with Epicurus' insistence on frank speech, I think we should use materialistic language to express the notion of *divinity* as *the gods*. Philodemus' innumerable, extra-terrestrial animals who have cultivated an incorruptible state of pleasure seem more coherent with Epicurus' teachings than does Lucretius' symbolic hymn. Presenting *any one personality* as the Epicurean expression of *divinity* might lead to the common misconceptions of the masses

that Epicurus warns against in his *Letter To Menoecus*. For example, a Christian might assume that Epicureans either worship *Venus* as a personal savior, or assume that we see *Venus the Creatrix* as pre-dating the natural world.

Invoking *the gods* instead of *Venus* serves to prevent a few common misconceptions.

(1) While pleasure is universal, the means by which pleasure is realized is unique to each animal. *This* god may pursue a different path to pleasure than *that* god. No *one God* offers a path that can be prescribed as a universal panacea.

(2) Students of our tradition do not **need** to rely on metaphors to understand *divinity*. Most forms of idealism tend to abuse the use of ambiguous metaphors to obscure their contradictions. Our philosophy is not *limited* to metaphors.

(3) *Venus* is a culturally-contextualized personality from ancient Rome (or Aphrodite in Ancient Greece); therein, *Venus* isn't nearly as accessible to a contemporary audience as is *Mother Nature*, to exemplify a more viable metaphor.

(4) *Venus* as a symbol of life and fertility invokes images of verdant field, succulent fruit, and life as it is on Earth. *The gods* may be silicon-based lifeforms who breathe methane, or something even more unexpected.

(5) While Lucretius is one of our primary sources of information, he wrote exclusively in poetic verse, and we have an extra layer of interpretation to even understand what *Venus* symbolizes. That's a burden on new students.

As a general expression of our philosophy, the use of mythic personification is an invitation to misinterpret a philosophy that has been radically misinterpreted throughout history, particularly by self-proclaimed Epicureans, like the Italian Humanists who synthesized Epicurean physics with faith in their Christ. If we are to invoke a *primary divinity* at all, I would suggest using the contemporary metaphor of *Mother Nature*. Even better, I think it best to avoid using metaphors as much as possible when referring to *divinity*, and, instead, privilege the phrase "*the gods*".

Post by "Joshua" of August 20, 2021 at 5:17 PM

Quote

Are there any other contenders for the role of primary divinity in Epicurean religion?

If the interpretation of George Santayana and other scholars is to be trusted, Lucretius' Venus is only one half of a dyad representing the Empedoclean principles of Love and Strife, re-creation and destruction, accretion and dissolution—things coming together and things falling apart. Co-equal and co-eternal, and each a necessary condition for the existence of the other.

Venus, then; first among equals? I don't have an opinion on whether or not DRN is a finished poem, but I find I love the idea that a 7th book would have ended with a Requiem to Mars—as in a sense the 6th book does, with the account of the plague in Athens.

Interestingly (or perhaps not), Venus is the second brightest object in the night sky and Mars occasionally outshines even Jupiter himself for third place.

Your post brings back a memory of Civics class in high school. One of our homework assignments was to draft a Declaration of Independence from whatever we chose. I wish I could remember what I declared my independence from. 🤔

Post by “Cassius” of August 20, 2021 at 5:28 PM

I think it is totally compatible with the intent of this thread to discuss and debate competing views of the entire subject, so these are good starting comments. The basic point is compatible regardless of whether you take an "idealist" or "realist" position, and those two positions are probably as close or close as the respective competing camps within most well-known religious denominations - and perhaps closer.

It has been a while since i glanced at the "On Piety" material or any of the other more obscure texts. If someone recalls any specific references to any deities that would probably be good to add to the discussion.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 20, 2021 at 8:27 PM

Off the top of my head, Buddhism is a religion that doesn't worship a god but follows its founder's teachings. So that might apply in some way to this discussion.

Post by “Cassius” of August 20, 2021 at 8:29 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2156-declaration-of-rights-of-epicureans-to-freedom-of-religion-cassius-declaration-o/>

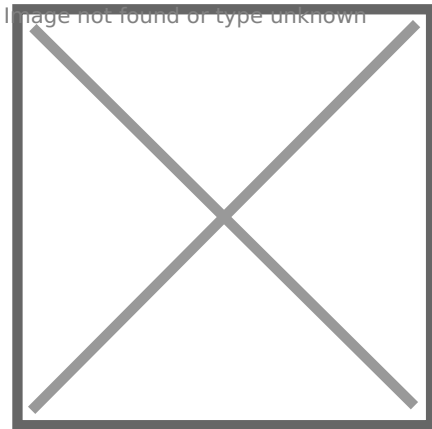
Yes, and as far as I know they are fully recognized at least in the USA as a "legitimate religion."
Excellent point.

Post by "Cassius" of August 21, 2021 at 6:44 AM

This link provides an introductory discussion to the key phrase "sincerely held belief."

[Employers' Guide to the Religious Exemption for the COVID-19 Vaccine | Insights | Venable LLP](#)

This Florida Bar link might be the best one:



[Religious Accommodation in the Workplace: The Devil is in the Detail](#)

As a leader in technology, Circle 9 Corporation installed new time and attendance biometric hand scanners, which replaced traditional timesheets. Ali Ghieri, ...
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Other links:

<https://www.uvu.edu/facultyrelations/docs/guidelines-for-the-accommodation-of-sincerely-held-religious-beliefs-and-practices.pdf>

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2156-declaration-of-rights-of-epicureans-to-freedom-of-religion-cassius-declaration-o/>