

Episode 227 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 02 - Velleius Begins His Attack On Traditional Views Of The Gods

Post by "Cassius" of May 18, 2024 at 3:44 PM

Tau Phi I think that you've stated the relationship. There are lots of things that we cannot perceive directly, like atoms, but we hold firmly that they exist and we base our actions on confidence that they (atoms) are at the basis of all things, and not supernatural gods.

Further, I think those who say that we "cannot interact" with the gods have to be careful that they are not going further than the texts support. They were talking about perceiving images of the gods, and those images would not be magical and would presumably be traveling from the intermundia to us (although that section seems to indicate the opposite direction). A fair reading of the various texts certainly seems to imply that while we DO not see them, the reason is that they are too far off to see, not that there is some kind of magical impenetrable barrier to seeing them, if we were closer, just like we see that the tower up close is square rather than round.

Also, I do not think that the "cannot" should be extended to more than the observation that in Epicurus' time they "could not" travel to the moon. I would see no theoretical reason why, having advanced to space travel, humans could not travel toward or even to the intermundia, just as Lucretius analogizes when he talks about what he sees of the intermundia in his mind's eye in the poem.

I see no reason at all not to conclude that Epicurus thought that it was important to affirm that there is life throughout the universe, that there is life that operates more successfully (and less successfully) than we do, and that "the gods" are examples of what we expect to find as we extend our observations out into the universe.

I understand that there are people, Frances Wright among them, as seen in her writings after "A Few Days In Athens," who have no use for that kind of theorizing. They think we should focus our entire attention here on earth and not worry about more cosmic issues. But I think Epicurus thought that huge numbers of people DO have need for such theorizing as part of their confidence that the universe is entirely natural and has no supernatural component. I think that way myself, and I am confident that there are large numbers of people who, as part of their Epicurean reading, want to understand where Epicurus was coming from as a part of their overall thinking about the universe.