

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

Post by “Eikadistes” of June 13, 2024 at 10:48 AM

I think it is important to consider Epicurus' context in a post-Alexandrian world. Epicurus would have thrived at a time when the Greeks became linked with a trans-continental empire that made them aware of dozens of new languages, commodities, and religions. Diogenes records Epicurus as having had a fascination with Pyrrho, who accompanied Alexander's army to Northwest India and modern-day Afghanistan, so we know that Epicurus had an interest in 4th-century BCE anthropology. One can imagine how an intellectual in this context might have been struck at the discovery that every group of humans whom Alexander encountered had some sort of cultural practice in which they reserved time to interface with inspirational or behaviorally-impactful images in their minds that do not correspond with physical objects in the immediate environment.

Knowledge of spiritual ideas would seem to have been confirmed by the independent attestation of foreign peoples. Based on the cultural exchange of ideas that occurred after Alexander's conquest, it would seem that *everyone* from *every* part of the planet knew that *gods are sublime*, in the same way that *everyone* from *every* part of the planet knew that *water is refreshing* and *sex feels good*. (Along those lines, *every* group of humans seem to have independently known that *intoxication is memorable*, and—what I continue to emphasize is *not only* not a coincidence, but is rather a fundamental feature of spirituality—almost every religion incorporates an intoxicant or intoxicating practice into the heart of their rituals). Indeed, knowledge of "the gods" is self-evident from Egypt to India and everywhere in-between: *everyone has met the divine nature without ever having shaken its hand*.

Since the gods did not proverbially walk door-to-door, introducing themselves to each civilization, each in its own tongue, the experience of the gods must be an internal phenomenon.