

Give Us an Example of God!

Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2024 at 12:56 PM

I would say that I think your post illustrates how two of the most important things to do at the very start is:

1 - Get rid of every implication and every attribute we think we know about gods except that they are (1) living beings, (2) live totally happy lives, and (3) are deathless.

2 - Then consider everything after that to be a matter of lesser importance, on which you can come up with some reasonable theories, but can't be sure about the details. That's just like the stars and other things in the sky where you don't have much evidence. You can come up with possibilities that are consistent with basic physics, and harmonize with point 1, but there you have to be satisfied with multiple possibilities rather than single certainties.

As Velleius put it in the nature of the gods, it's Point 1 that is essential and the place where you can really stop. Point 2 may be helpful to some people, but not to others, and we don't have enough information to be totally sure how things really are. So if we go into Point 2 we really have to be careful about the limits of what we know and what we don't.

Point 1 is the part we can be sure about based on the reasoning given:

Quote

XVII. Here, then, you see the foundation of this question clearly laid; for since it is the constant and universal opinion of mankind, independent of education, custom, or law, that there are Gods, it must necessarily follow that this knowledge is implanted in our minds, or, rather, innate in us. That opinion respecting which there is a general agreement in universal nature must infallibly be true; therefore it must be allowed that there are Gods; for in this we have the concurrence, not only of almost all philosophers, but likewise of the ignorant and illiterate. It must be also confessed that the point is established that we have naturally this idea, as I said before, or prenotion, of the existence of the Gods. As new things require new names, so that prenotion was called πρόληψις by Epicurus; an appellation never used before. On the same principle of reasoning, we think that the Gods are happy and immortal; for that nature which hath assured us that there are Gods has likewise imprinted in our minds the knowledge of their immortality and felicity; and if so, what Epicurus hath declared in these words is true: “That which is eternally happy cannot be burdened with any labor itself, nor can it impose any labor on another; nor can it be influenced by resentment or favor: because things which are liable to such feelings must be weak and frail.” We have said enough to prove that we should worship the Gods with piety, and without superstition, if that

were the only question.

Going that far gets you to the point where you are certain that there is no need to live in dread of gods.

Going further into Point 2 gets you more into matters of "curiosity" rather than what you really need to know, and takes you into areas where you are "directed partly by nature and partly by reason" where the conclusions are less certain. And there you get into areas where "waiting" and multiple possibilities are going to be the best you can do, and you start talking then about "quasi-bodies" and "quasi-blood" because you just don't have any more detail.

Quote

For the superior and excellent nature of the Gods requires a pious adoration from men, because it is possessed of immortality and the most exalted felicity; for whatever excels has a right to veneration, and all fear of the power and anger of the Gods should be banished; for we must understand that anger and affection are inconsistent with the nature of a happy and immortal being. These apprehensions being removed, no dread of the superior powers remains. To confirm this opinion, our curiosity leads us to inquire into the form and life and action of the intellect and spirit of the Deity.

XVIII. With regard to his form, we are directed partly by nature and partly by reason.