

An Example of Stoic Logical Reasoning - On Divination

Post by “Cassius” of October 26, 2024 at 8:17 PM

This comes from [Cicero's "On Divination"](#) (Loeb), and it would be perhaps useful to get some practice thinking about how this kind of thinking seems to attract some people and how an Epicurean would have responded to it:

Quote

The Stoics, for example, establish the existence of divination by the following process of reasoning:

"If there are gods and they do not make clear to man in advance what the future will be, then they do not love man; or, they themselves do not know what the future will be; or, they think that it is of no advantage to man to know what it will be; or, they think it inconsistent with their dignity to give man forewarnings of the future; or, finally, they, though gods, cannot give intelligible signs of coming events. But it is not true that the gods do not love us, for they are the friends and benefactors of the human race; nor is it true that they do not know their own decrees and their own plans; nor is it true that it is of no advantage to us to know what is going to happen, since we should be more prudent if we knew; nor is it true that the gods think it inconsistent with their dignity to give forecasts, since there is no more excellent quality than kindness; nor is it true that they have not the power to know the future; therefore it is not true that there are gods and yet that they do not give us signs of the future; but there are gods, therefore they give us such signs; and if they give us such signs, it is not true that they give us no means to understand those signs — otherwise their signs would be useless; and if they give us the means, it is not true that there is no divination; therefore there is divination.'