

Episode One Hundred Eighteen - Letter to Herodotus 07 - "Images" - There's More To Them Than Meets The Eye

Post by "Cassius" of April 22, 2022 at 8:16 AM

Oh one one thing I wish I had said differently in the podcast: When Lucretius talks in Book Four about whether Nature has created or lined up these images to be provided for us to think about things, I think at least a significant part of that has to be interpreted as suggesting something that Lucretius was setting up as absurd and not to be believed, just like the idea of nature lining up souls to inhabit the bodies of new-born things. It seems to me he intended us to answer that as "no" and that the real issues is more along the lines of what we tune our minds to receive via past experiences and choices, although with perhaps a dash of "nature" being added in somewhere in addition to the "nurture."

Here is that question which should be answered "no, or course not, the idols don't keep watch on our wills:"

Quote

[779] First of all it is asked why, whatever the whim may come to each of us to think of, straightway his mind thinks of that very thing. Do the idols keep watch on our will, and does the image rise up before us, as soon as we desire, whether it pleases us to think of sea or land or sky either? Gatherings of men, a procession, banquets, battles, does nature create all things at a word, and make them ready for us? And that when in the same place and spot the mind of others is thinking of things all far different.

And Here is the basis for suggesting that the images of things can be real and yet not reflect actually-existing things:

Quote

[732] And so we see Centaurs and the limbs of Scyllas, and the dog-faces of Cerberus and idols of those who have met death, and whose bones are held in the embrace of earth; since idols of every kind are borne everywhere, some which are created of their own accord even in the air, some which depart in each case from diverse things, and those again which are made and put together from the shapes of these. For in truth the image of the Centaur comes not from a living thing, since there never was the nature of such a living creature, but when by chance the images of man and horse have met,

they cling together readily at once, as we have said ere now, because of their subtle nature and fine fabric. All other things of this kind are fashioned in the same way. And when they move nimbly with exceeding lightness, as I have shown ere now, any one such subtle image stirs their mind; for the mind is fine and of itself wondrous nimble.

And that's the basis for my suggestion above that this is probably the prime contender for reconciling how the gods can be "real" (the images are real) and yet the truth about the gods (what we more accurately gather about their true natures) does not come entirely or even primarily from what the images convey. They are neither totally idealistic nor totally "real" in the way that we are observing them, and that leads back to incorporating such issues as isonomia and "nature never makes only one thing of a kind."