

Episode 229 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 04 - Velleius Continues His Attack On Intelligent Design

Post by "Cassius" of May 18, 2024 at 10:15 AM

Agenda For This Episode

1. Did Epicurus Argue That Infinity Alone (given eternal time and boundless space, *anything* can happen, and *anything* includes life) is sufficient explanation for life in the universe? We'll respond to this argument as mentioned in [this recent article](#), especially since [this Wikipedia article](#) suggests that this argument will appear later in "On The Nature of The Gods."
2. These are your doctrines, Lucilius; but what those of others are I will endeavor to ascertain by tracing them back from the earliest of ancient philosophers. [Thales the Milesian](#), who first inquired after such subjects, asserted water to be the origin of things, and that God was that mind which formed all things from water. If the Gods can exist without corporeal sense, and if there can be a mind without a body, why did he annex a mind to water?
3. It was [Anaximander's](#) opinion that the Gods were born; that after a great length of time they died; and that they are innumerable worlds. But what conception can we possibly have of a Deity who is not eternal?
4. [Anaximenes](#), after him, taught that the air is God, and that he was generated, and that he is immense, infinite, and always in motion; as if air, which has no form, could possibly be God; for the Deity must necessarily be not only of some form or other, but of the most beautiful form. Besides, is not everything that had a beginning subject to mortality?
5. XI. [Anaxagoras](#), who received his learning from Anaximenes, was the first who affirmed the system and disposition of all things to be contrived and perfected by the power and reason of an infinite mind; in which infinity he did not perceive that there could be no conjunction of sense and motion, nor any sense in the least degree, where nature herself could feel no impulse. If he would have this mind to be a sort of animal, then there must be some more internal principle from whence that animal should receive its appellation. But what can be more internal than the mind? Let it, therefore, be clothed with an external body. But this is not agreeable to his doctrine; but we are utterly unable to conceive how a pure simple mind can exist without any substance annexed to it.
6. [Alcmæon of Crotona](#), in attributing a divinity to the sun, the moon, and the rest of the stars, and also to the mind, did not perceive that he was ascribing immortality to mortal beings.
7. [Pythagoras](#), who supposed the Deity to be one soul, mixing with and pervading all nature, from which our souls are taken, did not consider that the Deity himself must, in consequence of this doctrine, be maimed and torn with the rending every human soul from it; nor that, when the human mind is afflicted (as is the case in many instances),

that part of the Deity must likewise be afflicted, which cannot be. If the human mind were a Deity, how could it be ignorant of any thing? Besides, how could that Deity, if it is nothing but soul, be mixed with, or infused into, the world?

8. Then [Xenophanes](#), who said that everything in the world which had any existence, with the addition of intellect, was God, is as liable to exception as the rest, especially in relation to the infinity of it, in which there can be nothing sentient, nothing composite.
9. [Parmenides](#) formed a conceit to himself of something circular like a crown. (He names it Stephane.) It is an orb of constant light and heat around the heavens; this he calls God; in which there is no room to imagine any divine form or sense. And he uttered many other absurdities on the same subject; for he ascribed a divinity to war, to discord, to lust, and other passions of the same kind, which are destroyed by disease, or sleep, or oblivion, or age. The same honor he gives to the stars; but I shall forbear making any objections to his system here, having already done it in another place.