

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

Post by “Little Rocker” of May 20, 2024 at 3:15 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

Given that all our ideas are necessarily built only from impressions of the outside world, I do not understand how the idealist interpretation is tenable. We need impressions from external physical objects to form our thoughts.

This is not something I have fixed views on, and apologies if I'm rehashing something already well-traveled, but Sedley has argued that Cicero has it right in the *Nature of the Gods* 1.43-5 that for Epicurus, our grasp of the gods is innate. As I understand it, Sedley thinks it's a natural outgrowth of another thing Epicurus considers innate--our desire for pleasure. Or at least that's how I'm reading this passage:

'The question then arises how we come to have this innate predisposition, given that, in Epicurean eyes, it cannot have been hardwired into us by any divine creator. The answer should be as follows. According to Epicurus all animals have, by nature and without divine design, an innate desire to maximize their own pleasure, and for human beings that maximization is identifiable with a life of blessed tranquillity, untainted by the fear of death. The gods, correctly understood in accordance with the basic *prolepsis* as blessed and altogether free from the fear of death, are an ideal model of just such a life. Each of us has an innate propensity to imagine – and in particular to dream of – the being we would ideally like to become. By doing so, we are *ipso facto* giving a concrete realization to the *prolepsis* of god. Hence our innate predisposition to form this *prolepsis* is likely to amount to our natural tendency to form a graphic picture of our own equally innate moral agenda. And the guaranteed truth of the *prolepsis* may well be identifiable with the truth of our intuitive underlying conception of the best life.'