

Episode 234 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 09 - Dealing With Marcus Aurelius And The Canonical Basis For the Epicurean View Of Divinity

Post by "Cassius" of July 6, 2024 at 8:50 PM

An additional fly in the ointment is that in reading ahead to a section where Velleius is being attacked, it seems that I remember seeing another reference to these images and the gods, and that in the second reference the preposition goes the other way.

Of course I don't have the cite on the tip of my tongue and without it this comment is useless, but I will see what I can do, and Joshua and I can look for it as we go further in OTNOTG.

Edit - it might be this from later in Book One, but I may remember something even more definite. Plus this is Yonge and I may be remembering Rackham:

XXXVII. "They have nothing to do," your teacher says. Epicurus truly, like indolent boys, thinks nothing preferable to idleness; yet those very boys, when they have a holiday, entertain themselves in some sportive exercise. But we are to suppose the Deity in such an inactive state that if he should move we may justly fear he would be no longer happy. This doctrine divests the Gods of motion and operation; besides, it encourages men to be lazy, as they are by this taught to believe that the least labor is incompatible even with divine felicity.

But let it be as you would have it, that the Deity is in the form and image of a man. Where is his abode? Where is his habitation? Where is the place where he is to be found? What is his course of life? And what is it that constitutes the happiness which you assert that he enjoys? For it seems necessary that a being who is to be happy must use and enjoy what belongs to him. And with regard to place, even those natures which are inanimate have each their proper stations assigned to them: so that the earth is the lowest; then water is next above the earth; the air is above the water; and fire has the highest situation of all allotted to it. Some creatures inhabit the earth, some the water, and some, of an amphibious nature, live in both. There are some, also, which are thought to be born in fire, and which often appear fluttering in burning furnaces.

In the first place, therefore, I ask you, Where is the habitation of your Deity? Secondly, What motive is it that stirs him from his place, supposing he ever moves? And, lastly, since it is peculiar to animated beings to have an inclination to something that is agreeable to their several natures, what is it that the Deity affects, and to what purpose does he exert the motion of his mind and reason? In short, how is he happy? how eternal? Whichever of these points you touch upon, I am afraid you will come lamely off. For there is never a proper end to reasoning

which proceeds on a false foundation; for you asserted likewise that the form of the Deity is perceptible by the mind, but not by sense; that it is neither solid, nor invariable in number; that it is to be discerned by similitude and transition, and that a constant supply of images is perpetually flowing on from innumerable atoms, on which our minds are intent; so that we from that conclude that divine nature to be happy and everlasting.

Edit TWO == same implication of direction from the gods:

XXXVIII. What, in the name of those Deities concerning whom we are now disputing, is the meaning of all this? For if they exist only in thought, and have no solidity nor substance, what difference can there be between thinking of a Hippocentaur and thinking of a Deity? Other philosophers call every such conformation of the mind a vain motion; but you term it “the approach and entrance of images into the mind.” Thus, when I imagine that I behold T. Gracchus haranguing the people in the Capitol, and collecting their suffrages concerning M. Octavius, I call that a vain motion of the mind: but you affirm that the images of Gracchus and Octavius are present, which are only conveyed to my mind when they have arrived at the Capitol. The case is the same, you say, in regard to the Deity, with the frequent representation of which the mind is so affected that from thence it may be clearly understood that the Gods are happy and eternal.