

Episode 244 - Cicero's OTNOTG 19 - Zeno's Paradoxes - Profundity Or Gaslighting?

Post by "Cassius" of August 28, 2024 at 9:36 PM

Welcome to Episode 244 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where we have a thread to discuss this and all of our podcast episodes.

Today we are continuing to review Cicero's "On the Nature of The Gods," which began with the Epicurean spokesman Velleius defending the Epicurean point of view. This week will continue into Section 27 as Cotta, the Academic Skeptic, responds to Velleius, and we - in turn - will respond to Cotta in particular and the Skeptical argument in general.

For the main text we are using primarily the [Yonge translation, available here at Archive.org](#). The text which we include in these posts is available [here](#). We will also refer to the public domain version of the Loeb series, which contains both Latin and English, [as translated by H. Rackham](#).

Additional versions can be found here:

- [Frances Brooks 1896 translation at Online Library of Liberty](#)
- [Lacus Curtius Edition \(Rackham\)](#)
- [PDF Of Loeb Edition at Archive.org by Rackham](#)
- [Gutenberg.org version by CD Yonge](#)

A list of arguments presented [will eventually be put together here](#).

Today's Text

XXVII. This, I perceive, is what you contend for, that the Gods have a certain figure that has nothing concrete, nothing solid, nothing of express substance, nothing prominent in it; but that it is pure, smooth, and transparent. Let us suppose the same with the Venus of Cos, which is not a body, but the representation of a body; nor is the red, which is drawn there and mixed with the white, real blood, but a certain resemblance of blood; so in Epicurus's Deity there is no real substance, but the resemblance of substance.

Let me take for granted that which is perfectly unintelligible; then tell me what are the lineaments and figures of these sketched-out Deities. Here you have plenty of arguments by which you would show the Gods to be in human form. The first is, that our minds are so anticipated and prepossessed, that whenever we think of a Deity the human shape occurs to us. The next is, that as the divine nature excels all things, so it ought to be of the most beautiful form, and there is no form more beautiful than the human; and the third is, that reason cannot reside in any other shape.

First, let us consider each argument separately. You seem to me to assume a principle, despotically I may say, that has no manner of probability in it. Who was ever so blind, in contemplating these subjects, as not to see that the Gods were represented in human form, either by the particular advice of wise men, who thought by those means the more easily to turn the minds of the ignorant from a depravity of manners to the worship of the Gods; or through superstition, which was the cause of their believing that when they were paying adoration to these images they were approaching the Gods themselves. These conceits were not a little improved by the poets, painters, and artificers; for it would not have been very easy to represent the Gods planning and executing any work in another form, and perhaps this opinion arose from the idea which mankind have of their own beauty. But do not you, who are so great an adept in physics, see what a soothing flatterer, what a sort of procuress, nature is to herself? Do you think there is any creature on the land or in the sea that is not highly delighted with its own form? If it were not so, why would not a bull become enamored of a mare, or a horse of a cow? Do you believe an eagle, a lion, or a dolphin prefers any shape to its own? If nature, therefore, has instructed us in the same manner, that nothing is more beautiful than man, what wonder is it that we, for that reason, should imagine the Gods are of the human form? Do you suppose if beasts were endowed with reason that every one would not give the prize of beauty to his own species?

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