

Episode 248 - Cicero's OTNOTG 23 - Cotta Pushes The "Argument By Design" Against The Epicurean View That All - Including Gods - Is Natural

Post by "Joshua" of September 29, 2024 at 11:09 AM

Quote

The Egyptians (so much ridiculed) held no beasts to be sacred, except on account of some advantage which they had received from them. The ibis, a very large bird, with strong legs and a horny long beak, destroys a great number of serpents. These birds keep Egypt from pestilential diseases by killing and devouring the flying serpents brought from the deserts of Lybia by the south-west wind, which prevents the mischief that may attend their biting while alive, or any infection when dead.

Cotta's description of the folkloric Wadjet, or flying desert serpent, comes from the *Histories* of Herodotus, where in Book II around section 75 the historian writes:

Quote

75. There is a region moreover in Arabia, situated nearly over against the city of Buto, to which place I came to inquire about the winged serpents: and when I came thither I saw bones of serpents and spines in quantity so great that it is impossible to make report of the number, and there were heaps of spines, some heaps large and others less large and others smaller still than these, and these heaps were many in number. This region in which the spines are scattered upon the ground is of the nature of an entrance from a narrow mountain pass to a great plain, which plain adjoins the plain of Egypt; and the story goes that at the beginning of spring winged serpents from Arabia fly towards Egypt, and the birds called ibises meet them at the entrance to this country and do not suffer the serpents to go by but kill them. On account of this deed it is (say the Arabians) that the ibis has come to be greatly honoured by the Egyptians, and the Egyptians also agree that it is for this reason that they honour these birds.

76. The outward form of the ibis is this:—it is a deep black all over, and has legs like those of a crane and a very curved beak, and in size it is about equal to a rail: this is the appearance of the black kind which fight with the serpents, but of those which most crowd round men's feet (for there are two several kinds of ibises) the head is bare and also the whole of the throat, and it is white in feathering except the head and neck and the extremities of the wings and the rump (in all these parts of which I have spoken it is a deep black), while in legs and in the form of the head it resembles the other. As for

the serpent its form is like that of the watersnake; and it has wings not feathered but most nearly resembling the wings of the bat. Let so much suffice as has been said now concerning sacred animals.

[This](#) site has a good write-up on the problem.