

Episode 252 - Why Reverence The Epicurean Gods?

Post by "Cassius" of October 26, 2024 at 11:22 AM

Citations relevant to this episode:

Vatican Saying 32: The veneration of the wise man is a great blessing to those who venerate him.

Velleius Previously In On The Nature of The Gods:

XVII ... We have then a preconception of such a nature that we believe the gods to be blessed and immortal. For nature, which bestowed upon us an idea of the gods themselves, also engraved on our minds the belief that they are eternal and blessed. If this is so, the famous maxim of Epicurus truthfully enunciates that "that which is blessed and eternal can neither know trouble itself nor cause trouble to another, and accordingly cannot feel either anger or favor, since all such things belong only to the weak." If we sought to attain nothing else beside piety in worshiping the gods and freedom from superstition, what has been said had sufficed; since the exalted nature of the gods, being both eternal and supremely blessed, would receive man's pious worship (for what is highest commands the reverence that is its due); and furthermore all fear of the divine power or divine anger would have been banished (since it is understood that anger and favor alike are excluded from the nature of a being at once blessed and immortal, and that these being eliminated we are menaced by no fears in regard to the powers above). But the mind strives to strengthen this belief by trying to discover the form of god, the mode of his activity, and the operation of his intelligence.

XX ... Well then, in this immensity of length and breadth and height there flits an infinite quantity of atoms innumerable, which though separated by void yet cohere together, and taking hold each of another form unions wherefrom are created those shapes and forms of things which you think cannot be created without the aid of bellows and anvils, and so have saddled us with an eternal master, whom day and night we are to fear. For who would not fear a prying busybody of a god, who foresees and thinks of and notices all things, and deems that everything is his concern? An outcome of this theology was first of all your doctrine of Necessity or Fate, *heimarmene*, as you termed it, the theory that every event is the result of an eternal truth and an unbroken sequence of causation. But what value can be assigned to a philosophy which thinks that everything happens by fate? It is a belief for old women, and ignorant old women at that. And next follows your doctrine of *mantike*, or Divination, which would so steep us in superstition, if we consented to listen to you, that we should be the devotees of soothsayers, augurs, oracle-mongers, seers and interpreters of dreams. But Epicurus has set us free from superstitious terrors and delivered us out of captivity, so that we have no fear of beings who, we know, create no trouble for themselves and seek to cause none to others, while we worship with pious reverence the transcendent majesty of nature.