

Episode 252 - Why Reverence The Epicurean Gods?

Post by "Cassius" of October 26, 2024 at 8:47 PM

Along the same lines of deprecating the senses, Joshua, this quote from Cicero's [ON DIVINATION](#):

Quote

"Moreover, divination finds another and a positive support in nature, which teaches us how great is the power of the soul when it is divorced from the bodily senses, as it is especially in sleep, and in times of frenzy or inspiration. For, as the souls of the gods, without the intervention of eyes or ears or tongue, understand each other and what each one thinks (hence men, even when they offer silent prayers and vows, have no doubt that the gods understand them), so the souls of men, when released by sleep from bodily chains, or when stirred by inspiration and delivered up to their own impulses, see things that they cannot see when they are mingled with the body. And while it is difficult, perhaps, to apply this principle of nature to explain that kind of divination which we call artificial, yet Posidonius, who digs into the question as deep as one can, thinks that nature gives certain signs of future events. Thus Heraclides of Pontus records that it is the custom of the people of Ceos, once each year, to make a careful observation of the rising of the Dog-star and from such observation to conjecture whether the ensuing year will be healthy or pestilential. For if the star rises dim and, as it were enveloped in a fog, this indicates a thick and heavy atmosphere, which will give off very unwholesome vapours; but if the star appears clear and brilliant, this is a sign that the atmosphere is light and pure and, as a consequence, will be conducive to good health.

"Again, Democritus expresses the opinion that the ancients acted wisely in providing for the inspection of the entrails of sacrifices; because, as he thinks, the colour and general condition of the entrails are prophetic sometimes of health and sometimes of sickness and sometimes also of whether the fields will be barren or productive. Now, if it is known by observation and experience that these means of divination have their source in nature, it must be that the observations made and records kept for a long period of time have added much to our knowledge of this subject. Hence, that natural philosopher introduced by Pacuvius into his play of Chryses, seems to show very scanty apprehension of the laws of nature when he speaks as follows: