

Episode 180 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 32

- Chapter 13 - The True Piety 03

Post by "Cassius" of June 18, 2023 at 7:45 AM

Welcome to Episode 180 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only 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 you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics. We are now in the process of a series of podcasts intended to provide a general overview of Epicurean philosophy based on the organizational structure employed by Norman DeWitt in his book "Epicurus and His Philosophy." This week we continue our discussion of Chapter 13, entitled "The True Piety."

Chapter XIII - The True Piety

- Gradation In Godhead
- Incorruptibility And Virtue
- Isonomy And the Gods
- The Life of the Gods
- Communion And Fellowship
- Prophecy And Prayer

- Gradation In Godhead

+ starting at 263 we may talk about the issue of images making up the gods like the issue of drops of water making up a river.

- Incorruptibility And Virtue

+ the maintenance of their own incorruptibility is ascribed to the gods as a virtue.

+ Epicurus himself did not call the gods immortal.

+ Thus it must be discerned that just

as the happiness of man is self-achieved, so the happiness of the gods is

self-preserved.

- p268 Plutarch, for example, who, though hostile. wrote with texts of Epi.

curus before him, has this to say: "Freedom from pain along with incorruptibility should have been inherent in the nature of the blissful being, standing in no need of active concern:"

- the gods are consequently

not deathless, only incorruptible; this incorruptibility, not being inherent. demands some sort of conservation. which can only be ascribed to the foresight and effort of the gods themselves. This. then, is their virtue. to preserve their own happiness and incorruptibility.

Here is part of Dewitt's reference:

Quote

"Since the prophet Daniel, for instance, was believed to have been inspired by God, it was to be expected that his prophecies would be fulfilled by God. Prophecy was subsidiary to divine providence. In conformity with this view Josephus gives a somewhat extended account of the prophecies of Daniel and their precise fulfillments, thus demonstrating for his readers the falsity of the Epicurean doctrines, which he rehearses at suitable length."

And here from Josephus is the concluding aspect of that section, referencing the Epicureans:

Quote

"And indeed it so came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel's vision; and what he wrote many years before they came to pass. In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government; and that our countrey should be made desolate by them. All these things did this man leave in writing, as God had shewed them to him. Insomuch that such as read his prophecies, and see how they have been fulfilled, would wonder at the honour wherewith God honoured Daniel; and may thence discover how the Epicureans are in an error, who cast providence out of human life; and do not believe that God takes care of the affairs of the world; nor that the universe is governed and continued in being by that blessed and immortal nature: but say, that the world is carried along of its own

without a ruler and a curator: which were it destitute of a guide, to conduct it, as they imagine, it would be like ships without pilots; which we see drowned by the winds: or like chariots without drivers, which are overturned: so would the world be dashed to pieces by its being carried without a providence, and so perish and come to nought. So that by the forementioned predictions of Daniel those men seem to me very much to err from the truth, who determine that God exercises no providence over human affairs. For if that were the case, that the world went on by mechanical necessity, we should not see that all things would come to pass according to his prophecy. Now as to my self I have so described these matters as I have found them and read them. But if any one is inclined to another opinion about them, let him enjoy his different sentiments without any blame from me."

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/55541404>

Post by “Don” of June 18, 2023 at 8:24 AM

As I understand it, current scholarly consensus is that the book of Daniel was written in the 2nd c BCE as if it was written in the 6th c BCE. All the predictions are "accurate" because the author was simply relating known historical facts. As a summary, from [Wikipedia](#):

Quote

Dating

The prophecies of Daniel are accurate down to the career of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, king of Syria and oppressor of the Jews, but not in its prediction of his death: the author seems to know about Antiochus' two campaigns in Egypt (169 and 167 BC), the desecration of the Temple (the "abomination of desolation"), and the fortification of the Akra (a fortress built inside Jerusalem), but he seems to know nothing about the reconstruction of the Temple or about the actual circumstances of Antiochus' death in late 164 BC. Chapters 10-12 must therefore have been written between 167 and 164 BC. There is no evidence of a significant time lapse between those chapters and chapters 8 and 9, and chapter 7 may have been written just a few months earlier again.

Further evidence of the book's date is in the fact that Daniel is excluded from the Hebrew Bible's canon of the prophets, which was closed around 200 BC, and the Wisdom of Sirach, a work dating from around 180 BC, draws on almost every book of the Old Testament except Daniel, leading scholars to suppose that its author was

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unaware of it. Daniel is, however, quoted in a section of the Sibylline Oracles commonly dated to the middle of the 2nd century BC, and was popular at Qumran at much the same time, suggesting that it was known from the middle of that century.

Post by “Don” of June 25, 2023 at 7:42 AM

Thought this may be of interest, too:

[Skeptic's Annotated Bible / Quran / Book of Mormon](#)

Post by “Joshua” of June 27, 2023 at 12:34 AM

We finished this chapter on Sunday and it's only occurring to me now that we never addressed the alleged Paradox of Epicurus. David Hume summarizes the passage from Lactantius:

Quote

Epicurus's old questions are yet unanswered. Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?

It's probably worth mentioning that the reason we never talk about this trilemma is that nothing similar to it survives in any ancient text prior to Lactantius in Late Antiquity. Scholars have also debated whether the paradox as expressed is even consistent with the texts that do survive.

Post by “Joshua” of June 27, 2023 at 12:36 AM

There is also a fourth line often added: "Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?"

Post by “Martin” of June 27, 2023 at 5:44 AM

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We addressed it much earlier in the podcast series.

Post by “Cassius” of June 29, 2023 at 6:33 PM

This episode is in editing stages and should be out by this weekend. We did indeed finish chapter 13, so it may be a little longer than normal.

In the meantime one of the topics covered very briefly (in "Incorruptibility and Virtue starting on page 267) is the issue documented by deWitt from several texts that the gods act to sustain their deathlessness and that they are not by nature immortal. DeWitt provides several cites for this very unexpected notion (but it does make sense if nothing but atoms are eternally the same) to which I would analogize Vatican Saying 37, which might relate to the gods being sustained by their pleasures in the same way that humans are "saved" or sustained by pleasures. It's an interesting thought to consider that the gods' deathlessness may arise from their continuous pleasures rather than that their pleasures simply number among them those that arise from being deathless and how such an idea might explain some of the references Epicurus makes about pleasures.

VS37. Nature is weak toward evil, not toward good: because it is saved by pleasures, but destroyed by pains.

Post by “Cassius” of June 29, 2023 at 11:00 PM

Episode 180 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available!

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/55541404>

Post by “Joshua” of June 30, 2023 at 6:12 PM

Seven Heavens:

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_heavens#The_seven_heavens_of_the_ancient_world

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3142-episode-180-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-32-chapter-13-the-true-piety-03/>

Monty Python:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=jt44vv14qwY>

Thank you [Cassius](#) for another fine example of your editing wizardry!

Post by “Joshua” of June 30, 2023 at 6:37 PM

Lucretius, proem to Book III

Quote

I see what is going on in all the void,
the majesty and calm habitations
of the gods reveal themselves in places
where no winds disturb, no clouds bring showers,
no white snow falls, congealed with bitter frost, [20]
to harm them, the always cloudless aether 30
vaults above, and they smile, as far and wide
the light spreads out.

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