

Entertaining Example of Epicurus' Reasons for Rejecting Divination (Nick Of Time - A Short Story Featuring William Shatner)

Post by "Cassius" of January 9, 2024 at 8:23 PM

Tonight while doing some recreational video surfing I came across an old Twilight Zone episode which does a good job of expressing the problems that arise from "Divination." First, here are some selected quotes, followed by a link to the video:



[U395](#)

Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Philosophers, X.135: Elsewhere he rejects divination entirely, such as in the Small Summary.

Aetius (Plutarch), Doxography, V.1.2 [p. 415 Diels]: Xenophanes and Epicurus dismissed the art of divination.

Cicero, On the Nature of the Gods, II.65.162: Prediction of future events is a favorite target for the wit of Epicurus.

Cicero, On Divination, I.3.5: All the rest, except for Epicurus, who spoke nonsense about the nature of the gods, endorsed divination.

Ibid., II.17.40: Hence, while [Epicurus] takes a roundabout way to destroy the gods, he does not hesitate to take a short road to destroy divination. [cf. Ibid., I.39.87; 49.109; II.17.39; 23.51]

Scholion on Aeschylus, Prometheus, 624: Epicureanism is the doctrine that abolishes divination; indeed, they say "Given that destiny rules all, you have procured pain ahead of time; predicting instead something positive, you have wiped out the pleasure of its realization. On the other hand, they also say "That which must happen, will still happen."

Origen, Against Celsus, VII.3, [p. 343 Hoesch.]: In regard to the oracles here enumerated, we reply that it would be possible for us to gather from the writings of Aristotle and the Peripatetic school not a few things to overthrow the authority of the Pythian and the other oracles. From Epicurus also, and his followers, we could quote passages to show that even among the Greeks themselves there were some who utterly discredited the oracles which were recognized and admired throughout the whole of Greece.

Cf. Lucian, Alexander the Oracle Monger, 17: It was an occasion for a Democritus, nay, for an Epicurus or a Metrodorus, perhaps, a man whose intelligence was steeled against such assaults by skepticism and insight, one who, if he could not detect the precise imposture, would at any rate have been perfectly certain that, though this escaped him, the whole thing was a lie and an impossibility.

Ibid., 25: Well, it was war to the knife between [Alexander] and Epicurus, and no wonder. What fitter enemy for a charlatan who patronized miracles and hated truth, than the thinker who had grasped the nature of things and was in solitary possession of that truth? ... The unmitigated Epicurus, as he used to call him, could not but be hateful to him, treating all such pretensions as absurd and puerile.



Post by “Bryan” of September 20, 2024 at 1:18 PM

A few weeks ago we were looking at Laërtios 10.135 "In other writings, Epíkouros rejects all divination, as in the *Short Epitome*, and says '*divination is non-existent - but even if existent: what comes from it ought to be considered nothing to us*'"

Along with this statement, we must also consider Torquatus (De Finibus 1.72): "*Should [Epíkouros], like Plato, have wasted his days studying music, geometry, arithmetic and astronomy? Those subjects start from false premises and so cannot be true. And even if they were true, they have no bearing on whether we live more pleasantly.*"

Divination does not exist. However, even if the predictions of diviners were real and sufficiently unambiguous to be actionable - those predictions still could not add anything to our life: because they cannot add to our already existing state of total pleasure (which we already easily achieve by fulfilling our natural and necessary needs).