

# Episode 226 - Cicero's On The Nature of The Gods - Epicurean Section 01 - Introduction

Post by "Cassius" of April 21, 2024 at 11:31 AM

**Welcome to Episode 226 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most 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.**

Now that we have finished the Epicurean sections of "On Ends," we will now move to the Epicurean sections of Cicero's "On the Nature of The Gods."

This week's episode will serve as a bridge between our discussion of "On Ends" and this new examination of Cicero, as we focus on what Cicero says about the contemporary state of views about the nature of the gods, and how Cicero came to prepare the current text.

Today we will go quickly through the first seven sections of Book 1, and then we will turn next week to Velleius' elaboration of the Epicurean view.

## On the Nature of the Gods Book One

I. There are many things in philosophy, my dear Brutus, which are not as yet fully explained to us, and particularly (as you very well know) that most obscure and difficult question concerning the Nature of the Gods, so extremely necessary both towards a knowledge of the human mind and the practice of true religion: concerning which the opinions of men are so various, and so different from each other, as to lead strongly to the inference that ignorance is the cause, or origin, of philosophy, and that the Academic philosophers have been prudent in refusing their assent to things uncertain: for what is more unbecoming to a wise man than to judge rashly? or what rashness is so unworthy of the gravity and stability of a philosopher as either to maintain false opinions, or, without the least hesitation, to support and defend what he has not thoroughly examined and does not clearly comprehend?

In the question now before us, the greater part of mankind have united to acknowledge that which is most probable, and which we are all by nature led to suppose, namely, that there are Gods. Protagoras doubted whether there were any. Diagoras the Melian and Theodorus of Cyrene entirely believed there were no such beings. But they who have affirmed that there are

Gods, have expressed such a variety of sentiments on the subject, and the disagreement between them is so great, that it would be tiresome to enumerate their opinions; for they give us many statements respecting the forms of the Gods, and their places of abode, and the employment of their lives. And these are matters on which the philosophers differ with the most exceeding earnestness. But the most considerable part of the dispute is, whether they are wholly inactive, totally unemployed, and free from all care and administration of affairs; or, on the contrary, whether all things were made and constituted by them from the beginning; and whether they will continue to be actuated and governed by them to eternity. This is one of the greatest points in debate; and unless this is decided, mankind must necessarily remain in the greatest of errors, and ignorant of what is most important to be known.

II. For there are some philosophers, both ancient and modern, who have conceived that the Gods take not the least cognizance of human affairs. But if their doctrine be true, of what avail is piety, sanctity, or religion? for these are feelings and marks of devotion which are offered to the Gods by men with uprightness and holiness, on the ground that men are the objects of the attention of the Gods, and that many benefits are conferred by the immortal Gods on the human race. But if the Gods have neither the power nor the inclination to help us; if they take no care of us, and pay no regard to our actions; and if there is no single advantage which can possibly accrue to the life of man; then what reason can we have to pay any adoration, or any honors, or to prefer any prayers to them? Piety, like the other virtues, cannot have any connection with vain show or dissimulation; and without piety, neither sanctity nor religion can be supported; the total subversion of which must be attended with great confusion and disturbance in life.

I do not even know, if we cast off piety towards the Gods, but that faith, and all the associations of human life, and that most excellent of all virtues, justice, may perish with it.

There are other philosophers, and those, too, very great and illustrious men, who conceive the whole world to be directed and governed by the will and wisdom of the Gods; nor do they stop here, but conceive likewise that the Deities consult and provide for the preservation of mankind. For they think that the fruits, and the produce of the earth, and the seasons, and the variety of weather, and the change of climates, by which all the productions of the earth are brought to maturity, are designed by the immortal Gods for the use of man. They instance many other things, which shall be related in these books; and which would almost induce us to believe that the immortal Gods had made them all expressly and solely for the benefit and advantage of men. Against these opinions Carneades has advanced so much that what he has said should excite a desire in men who are not naturally slothful to search after truth; for there is no subject on which the learned as well as the unlearned differ so strenuously as in this; and since their opinions are so various, and so repugnant one to another, it is possible that none of them may be, and absolutely impossible that more than one should be, right.

III. Now, in a cause like this, I may be able to pacify well-meaning opposers, and to confute invidious censurers, so as to induce the latter to repent of their unreasonable contradiction, and

the former to be glad to learn; for they who admonish one in a friendly spirit should be instructed, they who attack one like enemies should be repelled. But I observe that the several books which I have lately published have occasioned much noise and various discourse about them; some people wondering what the reason has been why I have applied myself so suddenly to the study of philosophy, and others desirous of knowing what my opinion is on such subjects. I likewise perceive that many people wonder at my following that philosophy chiefly which seems to take away the light, and to bury and envelop things in a kind of artificial night, and that I should so unexpectedly have taken up the defense of a school that has been long neglected and forsaken. But it is a mistake to suppose that this application to philosophical studies has been sudden on my part. I have applied myself to them from my youth, at no small expense of time and trouble; and I have been in the habit of philosophizing a great deal when I least seemed to think about it; for the truth of which I appeal to my orations, which are filled with quotations from philosophers, and to my intimacy with those very learned men who frequented my house and conversed daily with me, particularly Diodorus, Philo, Antiochus, and Posidonius, under whom I was bred; and if all the precepts of philosophy are to have reference to the conduct of life, I am inclined to think that I have advanced, both in public and private affairs, only such principles as may be supported by reason and authority.

IV. But if any one should ask what has induced me, in the decline of life, to write on these subjects, nothing is more easily answered; for when I found myself entirely disengaged from business, and the commonwealth reduced to the necessity of being governed by the direction and care of one man,<sup>77</sup> I thought it becoming, for the sake of the public, to instruct my countrymen in philosophy, and that it would be of importance, and much to the honor and commendation of our city, to have such great and excellent subjects introduced in the Latin tongue. I the less repent of my undertaking, since I plainly see that I have excited in many a desire, not only of learning, but of writing; for we have had several Romans well grounded in the learning of the Greeks who were unable to communicate to their countrymen what they had learned, because they looked upon it as impossible to express that in Latin which they had received from the Greeks. In this point I think I have succeeded so well that what I have done is not, even in copiousness of expression, inferior to that language.

Another inducement to it was a melancholy disposition of mind, and the great and heavy oppression of fortune that was upon me; from which, if I could have found any surer remedy, I would not have sought relief in this pursuit. But I could procure ease by no means better than by not only applying myself to books, but by devoting myself to the examination of the whole body of philosophy. And every part and branch of this is readily discovered when every question is propounded in writing; for there is such an admirable continuation and series of things that each seems connected with the other, and all appear linked together and united.

V. Now, those men who desire to know my own private opinion on every particular subject have more curiosity than is necessary. For the force of reason in disputation is to be sought after rather than authority, since the authority of the teacher is often a disadvantage to those who

are willing to learn; as they refuse to use their own judgment, and rely implicitly on him whom they make choice of for a preceptor. Nor could I ever approve this custom of the Pythagoreans, who, when they affirmed anything in disputation, and were asked why it was so, used to give this answer: "He himself has said it;" and this "he himself," it seems, was Pythagoras. Such was the force of prejudice and opinion that his authority was to prevail even without argument or reason.

They who wonder at my being a follower of this sect in particular may find a satisfactory answer in my four books of Academical Questions. But I deny that I have undertaken the protection of what is neglected and forsaken; for the opinions of men do not die with them, though they may perhaps want the author's explanation. This manner of philosophizing, of disputing all things and assuming nothing certainly, was begun by Socrates, revived by Arcesilaus, confirmed by Carneades, and has descended, with all its power, even to the present age; but I am informed that it is now almost exploded even in Greece. However, I do not impute that to any fault in the institution of the Academy, but to the negligence of mankind. If it is difficult to know all the doctrines of any one sect, how much more is it to know those of every sect! which, however, must necessarily be known to those who resolve, for the sake of discovering truth, to dispute for or against all philosophers without partiality.

I do not profess myself to be master of this difficult and noble faculty; but I do assert that I have endeavored to make myself so; and it is impossible that they who choose this manner of philosophizing should not meet at least with something worthy their pursuit. I have spoken more fully on this head in another place. But as some are too slow of apprehension, and some too careless, men stand in perpetual need of caution. For we are not people who believe that there is nothing whatever which is true; but we say that some falsehoods are so blended with all truths, and have so great a resemblance to them, that there is no certain rule for judging of or assenting to propositions; from which this maxim also follows, that many things are probable, which, though they are not evident to the senses, have still so persuasive and beautiful an aspect that a wise man chooses to direct his conduct by them.

VI. Now, to free myself from the reproach of partiality, I propose to lay before you the opinions of various philosophers concerning the nature of the Gods, by which means all men may judge which of them are consistent with truth; and if all agree together, or if any one shall be found to have discovered what may be absolutely called truth, I will then give up the Academy as vain and arrogant. So I may cry out, in the words of Statius, in the Synephebi,

Ye Gods, I call upon, require, pray, beseech, entreat, and implore the attention of my countrymen all, both young and old;

yet not on so trifling an occasion as when the person in the play complains that,

In this city we have discovered a most flagrant iniquity: here is a professed courtesan, who refuses money from her lover;

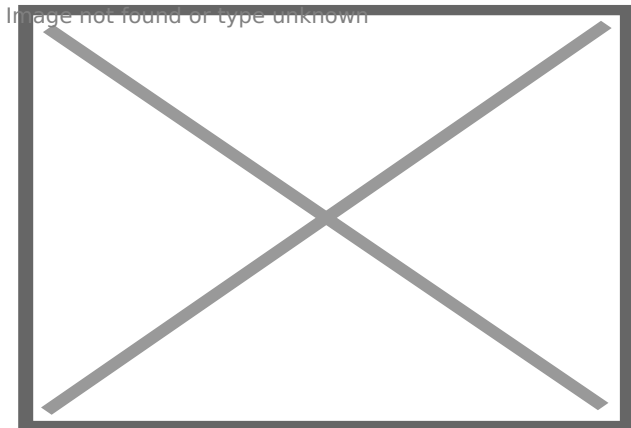
but that they may attend, know, and consider what sentiments they ought to preserve concerning religion, piety, sanctity, ceremonies, faith, oaths, temples, shrines, and solemn sacrifices; what they ought to think of the auspices over which I preside;<sup>78</sup> for all these have relation to the present question. The manifest disagreement among the most learned on this subject creates doubts in those who imagine they have some certain knowledge of the subject.

Which fact I have often taken notice of elsewhere, and I did so more especially at the discussion that was held at my friend C. Cotta's concerning the immortal Gods, and which was carried on with the greatest care, accuracy, and precision; for coming to him at the time of the Latin holidays,<sup>79</sup> according to his own invitation and message from him, I found him sitting in his study,<sup>80</sup> and in a discourse with C. Velleius, the senator, who was then reputed by the Epicureans the ablest of our countrymen. Q. Lucilius Balbus was likewise there, a great proficient in the doctrine of the Stoics, and esteemed equal to the most eminent of the Greeks in that part of knowledge. As soon as Cotta saw me, You are come, says he, very seasonably; for I am having a dispute with Velleius on an important subject, which, considering the nature of your studies, is not improper for you to join in.

VII. Indeed, says I, I think I am come very seasonably, as you say; for here are three chiefs of three principal sects met together. If M. Piso was present, no sect of philosophy that is in any esteem would want an advocate. If Antiochus's book, replies Cotta, which he lately sent to Balbus, says true, you have no occasion to wish for your friend Piso; for Antiochus is of the opinion that the Stoics do not differ from the Peripatetics in fact, though they do in words; and I should be glad to know what you think of that book, Balbus? Says he, I wonder that Antiochus, a man of the clearest apprehension, should not see what a vast difference there is between the Stoics, who distinguish the honest and the profitable, not only in name, but absolutely in kind, and the Peripatetics, who blend the honest with the profitable in such a manner that they differ only in degrees and proportion, and not in kind. This is not a little difference in words, but a great one in things; but of this hereafter. Now, if you think fit, let us return to what we began with.

With all my heart, says Cotta. But that this visitor (looking at me), who is just come in, may not be ignorant of what we are upon, I will inform him that we were discoursing on the nature of the Gods; concerning which, as it is a subject that always appeared very obscure to me, I prevailed on Velleius to give us the sentiments of Epicurus. Therefore, continues he, if it is not troublesome, Velleius, repeat what you have already stated to us. I will, says he, though this new-comer will be no advocate for me, but for you; for you have both, adds he, with a smile, learned from the same Philo to be certain of nothing. What we have learned from him, replied I, Cotta will discover; but I would not have you think I am come as an assistant to him, but as an auditor, with an impartial and unbiased mind, and not bound by any obligation to defend any particular principle, whether I like or dislike it.

For the text as we go forward, we will likely use the last public domain translation in the Loeb series, which contains both Latin and English, as translated by H. Rackham. A copy of that can be found here:



[Cicero On Nature Of Gods Academica Loeb Rackham : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Cicero - On The Nature of The Gods - Academica  
archive.org

Links to Additional versions:

- Frances Brooks 1896 translation at Online Library of Liberty - <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/cicero-...ure-of-the-gods>
- Lacus Curtius Edition (Rackham) - [https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman.../1A\\*.html#note1](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman.../1A*.html#note1)
- PDF Of Loeb Edition at Archive.org - <https://archive.org/details/denatu...age/n5/mode/2up>
- Gutenberg.org version by CD Yonge - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De\\_Natura\\_Deorum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Natura_Deorum)

---

## Post by “Cassius” of April 24, 2024 at 12:15 PM

I have updated the first post above with the text from the first seven sections of Book One of "On the Nature of the Gods." We'll go through that only in summary form, but there is important information in it about the state of religious views in Cicero's time, and where the views of Epicurus fit into that spectrum.

---

## Post by “Cassius” of April 25, 2024 at 11:14 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3819-episode-226-cicero-s-on-the-nature-of-the-gods-epicurean-section-01-introduction/>

- Topics For This Week:

- Cicero says that the greater part of mankind is united in what Nature leads us to suppose, which is that there are gods.
- Protagoras and Diagoras the Melian and Theodorus of Cyrene entirely believed that there are no gods.
  - [Protagoras](#) [ ] Protagoras (/prəʊˈtæɡə,ræs/; Greek: Πρωταγόρας; c. 490 BC – c. 420 BC)[1] was a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher and rhetorical theorist. He is numbered as one of the sophists by Plato. In his dialogue Protagoras, Plato credits him with inventing the role of the professional sophist. Protagoras also is believed to have created a major controversy during ancient times through his statement that, "Man is the measure of all things," interpreted (possibly wrongly, since he disagreed) by Plato to mean that there is no objective truth; Protagoras seems to have meant that each person's own personal history, experiences and expectations, developed over their lifetime, determine their judgments, opinions, and statements regarding "truth" (which is the title of the book in which Protagoras made this statement). When a person makes a judgment about a certain thing—good or bad or beautiful or unjust—that person will differ from other people's judgments because their experience has been different.]
  - [Diagoras the Melian](#) Diagoras "the Atheist" of Melos (Greek: Διαγόρας ὁ Μήλιος) was a Greek poet and sophist of the 5th century BC. Throughout antiquity, he was regarded as an atheist, but very little is known for certain about what he actually believed. Anecdotes about his life indicate that he spoke out against ancient Greek religion. He allegedly chopped up a wooden statue of Heracles and used it to roast his lentils and revealed the secrets of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The Athenians accused him of asebeia (impiety) and banished him from their city. He died in Corinth.
  - [Theodorus of Cyrene](#) [Theodorus of Cyrene (Greek: Θεόδωρος ὁ Κυρηναῖος) was an ancient Greek mathematician who lived during the 5th century BC. The only first-hand accounts of him that survive are in three of Plato's dialogues: the Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman. In the former dialogue, he posits a mathematical construction now known as the Spiral of Theodorus. Little is known as Theodorus' biography beyond what can be inferred from Plato's dialogues. He was born in the northern African colony of Cyrene, and apparently taught both there and in Athens.[1] He complains of old age in the Theaetetus, the dramatic date of 399 BC of which suggests his period of flourishing to have occurred in the mid-5th century. The text also associates him with the sophist Protagoras, with whom he claims to have studied before turning to geometry.[2] A dubious tradition repeated among

ancient biographers like Diogenes Laërtius[3] held that Plato later studied with him in Cyrene, Libya.[1] This eminent mathematician Theodorus was, along with Alcibiades and many other of Socrates' companions (many of whom would be associated with the Thirty Tyrants), accused of distributing the mysteries at a symposium, according to Plutarch, who himself was priest of the temple at Delphi.]

- Those who affirm that gods exist are divided on many details, but the most important question that divides them is whether the gods are active in the affairs of our world or inactive.
  - How many people today hold to that view of "inactive" gods? Why?
- If the gods are inactive there is no reason to worry about piety, but it is possible that if we cast off piety then the virtues - including the most excellent, which is justice, may perish with it!
  - Note: This is specifically rejected in Diogenes of Oinoanda Fragment 20 -
    - **Fragment 20** - [So it is obvious that wrong-doers, given that they do not fear the penalties imposed by the laws, are not] afraid of [the gods.] This [has to be] conceded. For if they were [afraid, they] would not [do wrong]. As for [all] the others, [it is my opinion] that the [wise] are not [(reasoning indicates) righteous] on account of the gods, but on account of [thinking] correctly and the [opinions] they hold [regarding] certain things [and especially] pains and death (for indeed invariably and without exception human beings do wrong either on account of fear or on account of pleasures), and that ordinary people on the other hand are righteous, in so far as they are righteous, on account of the laws and the penalties, imposed by the laws, hanging over them. But even if some of their number are conscientious on account of the laws, they are few: only just two or three individuals are to be found among great segments of multitudes, and not even these are steadfast in acting righteously; for they are not soundly persuaded about providence. A clear indication of the complete inability of the gods to prevent wrongdoings is provided by the nations of the Jews and Egyptians, who, as well as being the most superstitious of all peoples, are the vilest of all peoples.
    - On account of what kind of gods, then, will human beings be righteous? For they are not righteous on account of the real ones or on account of Plato's and Socrates' Judges in Hades. We are left with this conclusion; otherwise, why should not those who disregard the laws scorn fables much more?
    - So, with regard to righteousness, neither does our doctrine do harm [not does] the opposite [doctrine help], while, with regard to the other condition, the opposite doctrine not only does not help, but on the

contrary also does harm, whereas our doctrine not only does not harm, but also helps. For the one removes disturbances, while the other adds them, as has already been made clear to you before. That not only [is our doctrine] helpful, [but also the opposite doctrine harmful, is clearly shown by] the [Stoics as they go astray. For they say in opposition to us] that the god both is maker of [the] world and takes providential care of it, providing for all things, including human beings. Well, in the first place, we come to this question: was it, may I ask, for his own sake that the god created the world [or for the sake of human beings? For it is obvious that it was from a wish to benefit either himself or human beings that he embarked on this] undertaking. For how could it have been otherwise, if nothing is produced without a cause and these things are produced by a god? Let us then examine this view and what Stoics mean. It was, they say, from a wish to have a city and fellow-citizens, just as if [he were an exile from a city, that] the god [created the world and human beings. However, this supposition, a concoction of empty talking, is] self-evidently a fable, composed to gain the attention of an audience, not a natural philosopher's argument searching for the truth and inferring from probabilities things not palpable to sense. Yet even if, in the belief that he was doing some good [to himself, the god] really [made the world and human beings], .....

- Other philosophers believe the whole world is directed and governed by the gods, and they consult and provide for the preservation of mankind.
  - Carneades rejected this. What do we know about [Carneades](#)? [ Carneades (/kɑːrˈniːədiːz/; Greek: Καρνεάδης, Karneadēs, "of Carnea"; 214/3–129/8 BC[2]) was a Greek philosopher,[3] perhaps the most prominent head of the Skeptical Academy in ancient Greece.[3] He was born in Cyrene.[4] By the year 159 BC,[citation needed] he had begun to attack many previous dogmatic doctrines, especially Stoicism and even the Epicureans,[5] whom previous skeptics had spared.]
- Then Cicero explains why he turned from politics to philosophy, and why he took up the Academic School as his own since it has been long neglected and forsaken and buries things in a kind of artificial night.
  - In truth, he has been studying philosophy and associating with philosophers all his life.
  - The practical reason why he started writing is that the republic had been taken over by Caesar, and he wanted to reproduce in Latin the learning of the Greeks.
  - Also death of his daughter and other things led to melancholy disposition.
- People should not care about his opinion, they should care about what is reasonable, and they should reject the custom of the Pythagoreans to refer all

- questions to whether the master (Pythagorus) said it himself.
- As to why he chose the Academy, we should look to his book on the "Academic Questions." The custom of the Academy is to "dispute all things and assume nothing certainly" and was begun by Socrates and reinvigorated by Carneades.
  - Cicero denies that he thinks that nothing whatsoever is true, but that there is so much falsehood blended with truth that there is no certain rule for judging what is true, and it follows that many things are probable enough, even though not evident to the senses, that a wise man chooses to direct his conduct by them.
  - So he is going to go through all the opinions of the major schools about the nature of the gods, and if we find that all of them agree on something, or that what any one says is absolutely true, then he will give up the Academy!
  - The scene then of the dispute will be home of [Gaius Aurelius Cotta](#), who was talking with Senator Gaius Velleius, the Epicurean. [Quintus Lucillius Balbus](#) was also there, taking the Stoic side. Cicero says that if Marcus Piso were present, no school would lack an advocate. It appears that Piso would have represented the Peripatetics, because Cotta says that Antiochus held that the Peripatetics did not differ from the Stoics in substance but only in words. Cotta says this is actually a significant difference, but says more on that later.
  - Velleius is asked to repeat what he is previously said for Cicero to hear it. Velleius replies with a smile that Cicero will not be fair but an advocate for Cotta's views, because just like Cotta, Cicero had learned from Philo to be certain of nothing. In response, Cicero proclaims his impartiality and lack of bias. 😊

---

### **Post by "Kalosyni" of April 26, 2024 at 8:46 AM**

Is it possible that Cicero and others in ancient times used similar thinking as Anselm to decide that there are gods?

[Anselm: Ontological Argument for the God's Existence | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)

---

### **Post by "Cassius" of April 26, 2024 at 8:51 AM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3819-episode-226-cicero-s-on-the-nature-of-the-gods-epicurean-section-01-introduction/>

I haven't refreshed my reading recently enough to know if Cicero includes a similar argument in "On The Nature of The Gods," but he might. We can discuss this in the same way that we can include Epicurus' "riddle," even though it is not explicitly in the text.

Might as well save people clicking on the link to see this very depressing chain of fallacious reasoning. Here it is - we might branch this out into a thread "Epicurean Responses to the Ontological Argument For God" and we can decide in which episode to include this discussion. We will probably want to develop this into a thread and be sure [Joshua](#) is ready for it before we decide which episode to include it in.

In fact, I am fine with listing out all major / similar logical arguments for the existence of supernatural gods and including them, or at least mention of them, as the episodes proceed. I suspect many of them will indeed be covered in what Velleius has to say, either explicitly or by implication.

## **a. The Argument Described**

[St. Anselm](#), Archbishop of Canterbury (1033-1109), is the originator of the ontological argument, which he describes in the *Proslogium* as follows:

[Even a] fool, when he hears of ... a being than which nothing greater can be conceived ... understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding... And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone. For suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater... Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.

---

## **Post by "Cassius" of April 26, 2024 at 9:01 AM**

Let's continue the discussion of arguments in favor of supernatural gods here:

[epicureanfriends.com/thread/3826/](https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3826/)

We can eventually split that thread too down into separate subthreads by argument, but let's start a general thread first so we can create the list that needs to be addressed.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3819-episode-226-cicero-s-on-the-nature-of-the-gods-epicurean-section-01-introduction/>

---

**Post by “Joshua” of April 26, 2024 at 10:07 AM**

Another thing I'd like to discuss during this series is John Mason Good's introduction to his translation of Lucretius. He genuinely makes the claim that Lucretius believed in an intelligent creator, someone who set the atoms into motion. I'll post more on that after work.

---

**Post by “Don” of April 26, 2024 at 10:29 AM**

[Quote from Joshua](#)

He genuinely makes the claim that Lucretius believed in an intelligent creator, someone who set the atoms into motion.

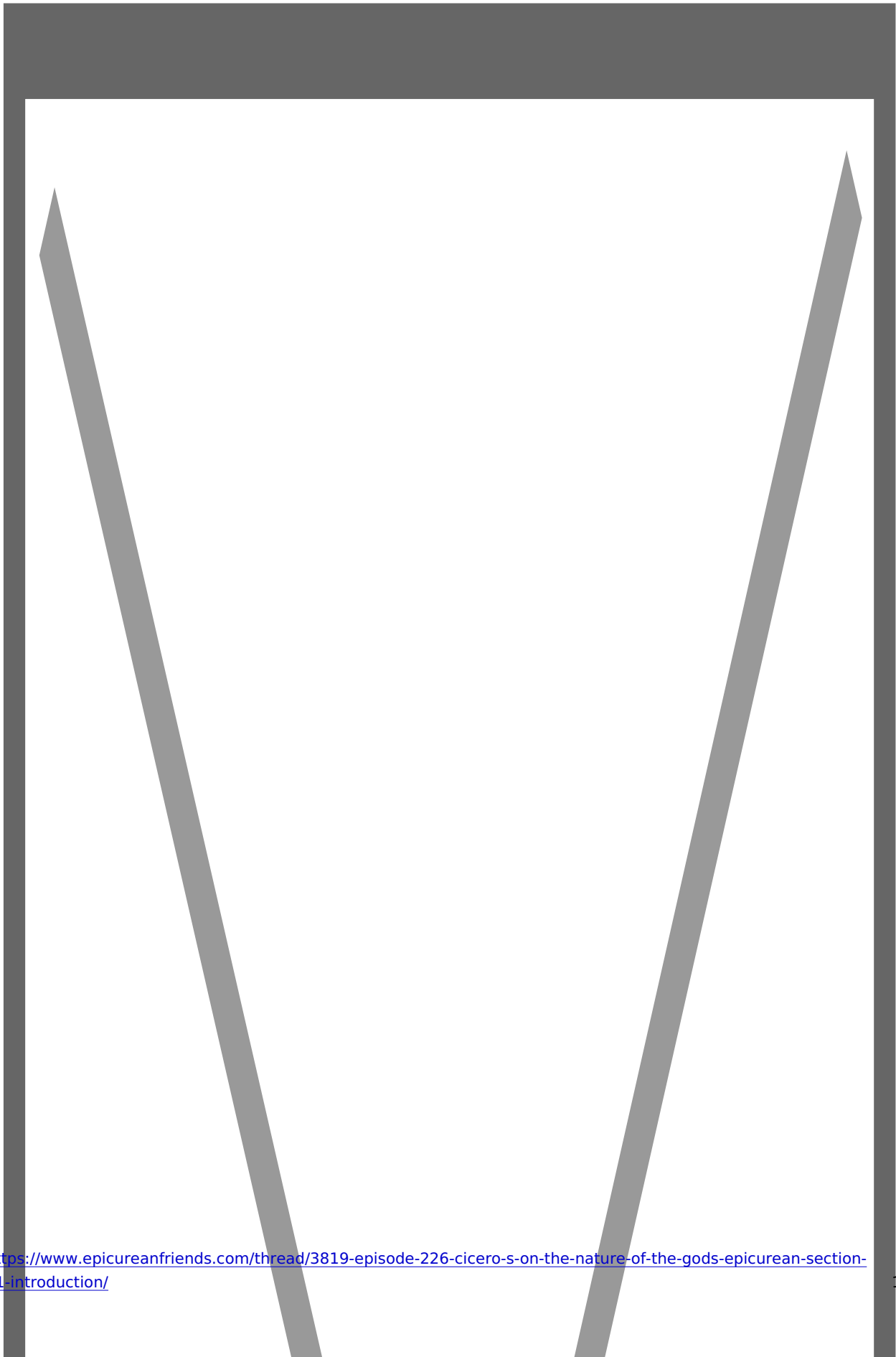
Well... That should be interesting.

---

**Post by “Kalosyni” of April 26, 2024 at 10:33 AM**

I found this on how Athenian Ephebeia were religiously educated:

Image not found or type unknown



## [Chapter 6 Religion](#)

"Chapter 6 Religion" published on 30 Jul 2020 by Brill.  
brill.com

---

### **Post by “Cassius” of April 30, 2024 at 6:00 PM**

Today the Lucretius Today Podcast starts a new series focusing on Epicurean views of the nature of the gods: "Episode 226 - Cicero's On The Nature of The Gods - Epicurean Section - Part 01 - Introduction"

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/59741463>

---

### **Post by “Cassius” of April 30, 2024 at 6:19 PM**

A word of introduction on this one: Not a moment is devoted to the discussion of "idealist" vs "realist" perspectives. This is a very general introductory discussion, tracking how Cicero himself introduces the subject.

As with all episodes, and especially this new series as to "the nature of the gods" - comments are welcome.

---

### **Post by “Don” of April 30, 2024 at 9:24 PM**

Thread

#### **[Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 215](#)**

I was working through Les Epicuriens before I have to return the interlibrary loan book and came across this in the section of Epicurus' writings. I was not aware of Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 215, but it appears to possibly be an unknown text of Epicurus although some scholars debate this attribution. It could just be a section of a known work that doesn't have the title at the end, too. It is definitely an Epicurean text, that's not debated.

The "O man" translation part includes ὦ] ἄνθρωπε,...

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3819-episode-226-cicero-s-on-the-nature-of-the-gods-epicurean-section-01-introduction/>



Don

August 16, 2022 at 3:53 PM

---

## Post by “Don” of May 1, 2024 at 8:09 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

A word of introduction on this one: Not a moment is devoted to the discussion of "idealist" vs "realist" perspectives.



If y'all do decide to wade into that, let me know, and I'll gird my loins (and refresh my memory on the sources) and show up ready to... talk 😊

---

## Post by “Cassius” of May 1, 2024 at 9:32 AM

We will definitely get to that at some point. As with this first episode, I think we found that there is going to be a lot to talk about in terms of Epicurus' relationship to religion that will take us some time to go through before we get to that.

Cicero has lots of general observations that are worth discussing, as we went through at length in this episode, and if I recall correctly Velleius goes through a lot of criticism of other schools before he gets to those final passages discussing Epicurus' own views.

So we will definitely call you when we get to that and in the meantime you're always welcome as well. There are plenty of issues, like Carneades (closer to Cicero than to the Stoics) criticizing the Stoic position on the gods determining every feather on every bird. I didn't have time to pursue that in episode one but it would be good to get a fix on to what extent the Cicero-team extended their insistence on "probability" rather than confidence to the gods themselves.

If I can do it I will try to re-read the whole book over the next couple of weeks while we are still going over Velleius, but that's an example of where it would be good to aim the big guns at the many names and details that Cicero is discussing which aren't very familiar.

So the Stoics were "more catholic than the Pope" in comparison to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, at least in terms of divine guidance of the affairs of men and the universe?

If so, I feel sure that our modern Stoics would squirm at that (to the extent they even realize it).

---

## Post by "Joshua" of May 16, 2024 at 12:24 AM

[Cassius](#) has asked for a clear refutation of the [Ontological Argument](#) and I have promised to attempt it. First, here is a syllogism of the argument as presented on the Wikipedia page.

Quote from Wikipedia

*In Chapter 3, Anselm presents a further argument in the same vein:[23]*

1. *By definition, God is a being than which none greater can be imagined.*
2. *A being that necessarily exists in reality is greater than a being that does not necessarily exist.*
3. *Thus, by definition, if God exists as an idea in the mind but does not necessarily exist in reality, then we can imagine something that is greater than God.*
4. *But we cannot imagine something that is greater than God.*
5. *Thus, if God exists in the mind as an idea, then God necessarily exists in reality.*
6. *God exists in the mind as an idea.*
7. *Therefore, God necessarily exists in reality.*

End Quote.

Let's look at these individually.

- *First Premise - By definition, God is a being than which none greater can be imagined.*

This premise establishes our major terms;

1. *God*: a being than which none greater can be imagined.
2. *Being*: an existence either imagined or real.
3. *Greatness*: an attribute of a being. Only one being can embody the superlative of this attribute, *Greatest*.
4. *Imagined*: Existing in the mind as an idea, but not exclusively; an *imagined* existence may also be a *real* existence.
5. *Real*: Existing outside the mind, but not exclusively; a *real* existence may also be an *imagined* existence.

- *Second Premise - A being that necessarily exists in reality is greater than a being that does not necessarily exist.*

"Necessarily" has a precise meaning in logic. *Necessary* conditions are often contrasted with *sufficient* conditions. e.g. A square is a parallelogram with four equal sides and four right angles. Having four sides is a necessary but not sufficient condition for being a square--all quadrilaterals have four sides but not all of them are squares. Having four sides is a necessary *and* sufficient condition for being a quadrilateral.

My commentary on the second premise:

This premise is a bare assertion, and to that extent is fairly weak. *Why* is a being that necessarily exists in reality greater than a being that does not necessarily exist? Let me offer the following syllogism as a counter;

1. *By definition, God is a being than which none greater can be imagined.*
2. *A being that has the power to choose whether to exist in reality or not is greater than a being, either real or imagined, that does not have this power.*
3. *Thus, by definition, God either exists in reality or does not according to his will.*
4. *It is not possible for us to know whether God has decided to cease existing in reality in any given moment.*
5. *Therefore, it is not possible to know whether God exists in reality.*

Can it be demonstrated that St. Anselm's second premise is truer than my second premise? Remember, they cannot both be true; a being that *necessarily* exists in reality cannot choose *not* to exist in reality. However, they can certainly both be false.

***To be continued...***

---

## **Post by "Cassius" of May 16, 2024 at 4:06 AM**

This is a great project Joshua and very worthy of continuing!!!

### [Quote from Joshua](#)

By definition, God is a being than which none greater can be imagined.

I presume there are all sorts of ways to come at the overall argument, but I wonder if the very first assertion ("by definition") does not already set the tone of the entire problem. The

assertion that our placing a label on something creates a physical reality seems to me a possible place to start.

"Definition" seems to me to be an apparent word game, and it probably ought to be seared into everyone's mind from an early age that words may be used to describe reality but do not constitute reality -- the "map is not the territory" observation that we have discussed many times before.

But no doubt there are many ways to get at the problems here and I hope you will continue.

---

## **Post by “Cassius” of June 21, 2024 at 5:40 PM**

This episode is now on Youtube:

<https://youtu.be/Pte4woEw23Q>