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**THE NATURE OF
THE GODS**

Cicero

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Book I

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 ignorance¹ 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. Protagoras² 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

¹ Some read *scientiam* and some *inscientiam*; the latter of which is preferred by some of the best editors and commentators.

² For a short account of these ancient Greek philosophers, see the sketch prefixed to the Academics (*Classical Library*).

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 published³ 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 philosophy⁴ 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 defence 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,⁵ 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

³ Cicero wrote his philosophical works in the last three years of his life. When he wrote this piece, he was in the sixty-third year of his age, in the year of Rome 709.

⁴ The Academic.

⁵ Diodorus and Posidonius were Stoics; Philo and Antiochus were Academics; but the latter afterward inclined to the doctrine of the Stoics.

disengaged from business, and the commonwealth reduced to the necessity of being governed by the direction and care of one man,⁶ 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

⁶ Julius Cæsar.

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;⁷ 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,⁸ according to his own invitation and message from him, I found him sitting in his study,⁹ 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. Piso¹⁰ 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

⁷ Cicero was one of the College of Augurs.

⁸ The *Latinæ Feriæ* was originally a festival of the Latins, altered by Tarquinius Superbus into a Roman one. It was held in the Alban Mount, in honor of Jupiter Latiaris. This holiday lasted six days: it was not held at any fixed time; but the consul was never allowed to take the field till he had held them.—*Vide* Smith, *Dict. Gr. and Rom. Ant.*, p. 414.

⁹ *Exhedra*, the word used by Cicero, means a study, or place where disputes were held.

¹⁰ M. Piso was a Peripatetic. The four great sects were the Stoics, the Peripatetics, the Academics, and the Epicureans.

think of that book, Balbus. I? 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.¹¹ 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 unbiassed mind, and not bound by any obligation to defend any particular principle, whether I like or dislike it.

VIII. After this, Velleius, with the confidence peculiar to his sect, dreading nothing so much as to seem to doubt of anything, began as if he had just then descended from the council of the Gods, and Epicurus's intervals of worlds. Do not attend, says he, to these idle and imaginary tales; nor to the operator and builder of the World, the God of Plato's Timæus; nor to the old prophetic dame, the *Πρόνοια* of the Stoics, which the Latins call Providence; nor to that round, that burning, revolving deity, the World, endowed with sense and understanding; the prodigies and wonders, not of inquisitive philosophers, but of dreamers!

For with what eyes of the mind was your Plato able to see that workhouse of such stupendous toil, in which he makes the world to be modelled and built by God? What materials, what tools, what bars, what machines, what servants, were employed in so vast a work? How could the air, fire, water, and earth pay obedience and submit to the will of the architect? From whence arose those five forms,¹² of which the rest were composed, so aptly contributing to frame the mind and produce the senses? It is tedious to go through all, as they are of such a sort that they look more like things to be desired than to be discovered.

But, what is more remarkable, he gives us a world which has been not only created, but, if I may so say, in a manner formed with hands, and yet he says it is eternal. Do you conceive him to have the least skill in natural philosophy who is capable of thinking anything to be everlasting that had a beginning? For what can possibly ever have been put together which cannot be dissolved again? Or what is there that had a beginning which will not have an end? If your Providence, Lucilius, is the same as Plato's God, I ask you, as before, who were the assistants, what were the engines, what was the plan and preparation of the whole work? If it is not the same, then why did she make the world mortal, and not everlasting, like Plato's God?

IX. But I would demand of you both, why these world-builders started up so suddenly, and lay dormant for so many ages? For we are not to conclude that, if there was no world, there were therefore no ages. I do not now speak of such ages as are

¹¹ It was a prevailing tenet of the Academics that there is no certain knowledge.

¹² The five forms of Plato are these: οὐσία, ταῦτόν, ἕτερον, στάσις, κίνησις.

finished by a certain number of days and nights in annual courses; for I acknowledge that those could not be without the revolution of the world; but there was a certain eternity from infinite time, not measured by any circumscription of seasons; but how that was in space we cannot understand, because we cannot possibly have even the slightest idea of time before time was. I desire, therefore, to know, Balbus, why this Providence of yours was idle for such an immense space of time? Did she avoid labor? But that could have no effect on the Deity; nor could there be any labor, since all nature, air, fire, earth, and water would obey the divine essence. What was it that incited the Deity to act the part of an ædile, to illuminate and decorate the world? If it was in order that God might be the better accommodated in his habitation, then he must have been dwelling an infinite length of time before in darkness as in a dungeon. But do we imagine that he was afterward delighted with that variety with which we see the heaven and earth adorned? What entertainment could that be to the Deity? If it was any, he would not have been without it so long.

Or were these things made, as you almost assert, by God for the sake of men? Was it for the wise? If so, then this great design was adopted for the sake of a very small number. Or for the sake of fools? First of all, there was no reason why God should consult the advantage of the wicked; and, further, what could be his object in doing so, since all fools are, without doubt, the most miserable of men, chiefly because they are fools? For what can we pronounce more deplorable than folly? Besides, there are many inconveniences in life which the wise can learn to think lightly of by dwelling rather on the advantages which they receive; but which fools are unable to avoid when they are coming, or to bear when they are come.

X. They who affirm the world to be an animated and intelligent being have by no means discovered the nature of the mind, nor are able to conceive in what form that essence can exist; but of that I shall speak more hereafter. At present I must express my surprise at the weakness of those who endeavor to make it out to be not only animated and immortal, but likewise happy, and round, because Plato says that is the most beautiful form; whereas I think a cylinder, a square, a cone, or a pyramid more beautiful. But what life do they attribute to that round Deity? Truly it is a being whirled about with a celerity to which nothing can be even conceived by the imagination as equal; nor can I imagine how a settled mind and happy life can consist in such motion, the least degree of which would be troublesome to us. Why, therefore, should it not be considered troublesome also to the Deity? For the earth itself, as it is part of the world, is part also of the Deity. We see vast tracts of land barren and uninhabitable; some, because they are scorched by the too near approach of the sun; others, because they are bound up with frost and snow, through the great distance which the sun is from them. Therefore, if the world is a Deity, as these are parts of the world, some of the Deity's limbs must be said to be scorched, and some frozen.

These are your doctrines, Lucilius; but what those of others are I will endeavor to ascertain by tracing them back from the earliest of ancient philosophers. Thales the Milesian, who first inquired after such subjects, asserted water to be the origin of things, and that God was that mind which formed all things from water. If the Gods can exist without corporeal sense, and if there can be a mind without a body, why did he annex a mind to water?

It was Anaximander's opinion that the Gods were born; that after a great length of time they died; and that they are innumerable worlds. But what conception can we possibly have of a Deity who is not eternal?

Anaximenes, after him, taught that the air is God, and that he was generated, and that he is immense, infinite, and always in motion; as if air, which has no form, could possibly be God; for the Deity must necessarily be not only of some form or other, but of the most beautiful form. Besides, is not everything that had a beginning subject to mortality?

XI. Anaxagoras, who received his learning from Anaximenes, was the first who affirmed the system and disposition of all things to be contrived and perfected by the power and reason of an infinite mind; in which infinity he did not perceive that there could be no conjunction of sense and motion, nor any sense in the least degree, where nature herself could feel no impulse. If he would have this mind to be a sort of animal, then there must be some more internal principle from whence that animal should receive its appellation. But what can be more internal than the mind? Let it, therefore, be clothed with an external body. But this is not agreeable to his doctrine; but we are utterly unable to conceive how a pure simple mind can exist without any substance annexed to it.

Alcmæon of Crotona, in attributing a divinity to the sun, the moon, and the rest of the stars, and also to the mind, did not perceive that he was ascribing immortality to mortal beings.

Pythagoras, who supposed the Deity to be one soul, mixing with and pervading all nature, from which our souls are taken, did not consider that the Deity himself must, in consequence of this doctrine, be maimed and torn with the rending every human soul from it; nor that, when the human mind is afflicted (as is the case in many instances), that part of the Deity must likewise be afflicted, which cannot be. If the human mind were a Deity, how could it be ignorant of any thing? Besides, how could that Deity, if it is nothing but soul, be mixed with, or infused into, the world?

Then Xenophanes, who said that everything in the world which had any existence, with the addition of intellect, was God, is as liable to exception as the rest, especially in relation to the infinity of it, in which there can be nothing sentient, nothing composite.

Parmenides formed a conceit to himself of something circular like a crown. (He names it Stephane.) It is an orb of constant light and heat around the heavens; this he calls God; in which there is no room to imagine any divine form or sense. And he uttered many other absurdities on the same subject; for he ascribed a divinity to war, to discord, to lust, and other passions of the same kind, which are destroyed by disease, or sleep, or oblivion, or age. The same honor he gives to the stars; but I shall forbear making any objections to his system here, having already done it in another place.

XII. Empedocles, who erred in many things, is most grossly mistaken in his notion of the Gods. He lays down four natures¹³ as divine, from which he thinks that all things were made. Yet it is evident that they have a beginning, that they decay, and that they are void of all sense.

Protagoras did not seem to have any idea of the real nature of the Gods; for he acknowledged that he was altogether ignorant whether there are or are not any, or what they are.

¹³ The four natures here to be understood are the four elements—fire, water, air, and earth; which are mentioned as the four principles of Empedocles by Diogenes Laertius.

What shall I say of Democritus, who classes our images of objects, and their orbs, in the number of the Gods; as he does that principle through which those images appear and have their influence? He deifies likewise our knowledge and understanding. Is he not involved in a very great error? And because nothing continues always in the same state, he denies that anything is everlasting, does he not thereby entirely destroy the Deity, and make it impossible to form any opinion of him?

Diogenes of Apollonia looks upon the air to be a Deity. But what sense can the air have? or what divine form can be attributed to it?

It would be tedious to show the uncertainty of Plato's opinion; for, in his *Timæus*, he denies the propriety of asserting that there is one great father or creator of the world; and, in his book of *Laws*, he thinks we ought not to make too strict an inquiry into the nature of the Deity. And as for his statement when he asserts that God is a being without any body—what the Greeks call ἀσώματος—it is certainly quite unintelligible how that theory can possibly be true; for such a God must then necessarily be destitute of sense, prudence, and pleasure; all which things are comprehended in our notion of the Gods. He likewise asserts in his *Timæus*, and in his *Laws*, that the world, the heavens, the stars, the mind, and those Gods which are delivered down to us from our ancestors, constitute the Deity. These opinions, taken separately, are apparently false; and, together, are directly inconsistent with each other.

Xenophon has committed almost the same mistakes, but in fewer words. In those sayings which he has related of Socrates, he introduces him disputing the lawfulness of inquiring into the form of the Deity, and makes him assert the sun and the mind to be Deities: he represents him likewise as affirming the being of one God only, and at another time of many; which are errors of almost the same kind which I before took notice of in Plato.

XIII. Antisthenes, in his book called the *Natural Philosopher*, says that there are many national and one natural Deity; but by this saying he destroys the power and nature of the Gods. Speusippus is not much less in the wrong; who, following his uncle Plato, says that a certain incorporeal power governs everything; by which he endeavors to root out of our minds the knowledge of the Gods.

Aristotle, in his third book of *Philosophy*, confounds many things together, as the rest have done; but he does not differ from his master Plato. At one time he attributes all divinity to the mind, at another he asserts that the world is God. Soon afterward he makes some other essence preside over the world, and gives it those faculties by which, with certain revolutions, he may govern and preserve the motion of it. Then he asserts the heat of the firmament to be God; not perceiving the firmament to be part of the world, which in another place he had described as God. How can that divine sense of the firmament be preserved in so rapid a motion? And where do the multitude of Gods dwell, if heaven itself is a Deity? But when this philosopher says that God is without a body, he makes him an irrational and insensible being. Besides, how can the world move itself, if it wants a body? Or how, if it is in perpetual self-motion, can it be easy and happy?

Xenocrates, his fellow-pupil, does not appear much wiser on this head, for in his books concerning the nature of the Gods no divine form is described; but he says the

number of them is eight. Five are moving planets;¹⁴ the sixth is contained in all the fixed stars; which, dispersed, are so many several members, but, considered together, are one single Deity; the seventh is the sun; and the eighth the moon. But in what sense they can possibly be happy is not easy to be understood.

From the same school of Plato, Heraclides of Pontus stuffed his books with puerile tales. Sometimes he thinks the world a Deity, at other times the mind. He attributes divinity likewise to the wandering stars. He deprives the Deity of sense, and makes his form mutable; and, in the same book again, he makes earth and heaven Deities.

The unsteadiness of Theophrastus is equally intolerable. At one time he attributes a divine prerogative to the mind; at another, to the firmament; at another, to the stars and celestial constellations.

Nor is his disciple Strato, who is called the naturalist, any more worthy to be regarded; for he thinks that the divine power is diffused through nature, which is the cause of birth, increase, and diminution, but that it has no sense nor form.

XIV. Zeno (to come to your sect, Balbus) thinks the law of nature to be the divinity, and that it has the power to force us to what is right, and to restrain us from what is wrong. How this law can be an animated being I cannot conceive; but that God is so we would certainly maintain. The same person says, in another place, that the sky is God; but can we possibly conceive that God is a being insensible, deaf to our prayers, our wishes, and our vows, and wholly unconnected with us? In other books he thinks there is a certain rational essence pervading all nature, indued with divine efficacy. He attributes the same power to the stars, to the years, to the months, and to the seasons. In his interpretation of Hesiod's *Theogony*,¹⁵ he entirely destroys the established notions of the Gods; for he excludes Jupiter, Juno, and Vesta, and those esteemed divine, from the number of them; but his doctrine is that these are names which by some kind of allusion are given to mute and inanimate beings. The sentiments of his disciple Aristo are not less erroneous. He thought it impossible to conceive the form of the Deity, and asserts that the Gods are destitute of sense; and he is entirely dubious whether the Deity is an animated being or not.

Cleanthes, who next comes under my notice, a disciple of Zeno at the same time with Aristo, in one place says that the world is God; in another, he attributes divinity to the mind and spirit of universal nature; then he asserts that the most remote, the highest, the all-surrounding, the all-enclosing and embracing heat, which is called the sky, is most certainly the Deity. In the books he wrote against pleasure, in which he seems to be raving, he imagines the Gods to have a certain form and shape; then he ascribes all divinity to the stars; and, lastly, he thinks nothing more divine than reason. So that this God, whom we know mentally and in the speculations of our minds, from which traces we receive our impression, has at last actually no visible form at all.

XV. Persæus, another disciple of Zeno, says that they who have made discoveries advantageous to the life of man should be esteemed as Gods; and the very things, he says, which are healthful and beneficial have derived their names from those of the Gods; so that he thinks it not sufficient to call them the discoveries of Gods, but he urges that they themselves should be deemed divine. What can be more absurd than to ascribe divine honors to sordid and deformed things; or to place among the Gods

¹⁴ These five moving stars are Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, and Venus. Their revolutions are considered in the next book.

¹⁵ Or, Generation of the Gods.

men who are dead and mixed with the dust, to whose memory all the respect that could be paid would be but mourning for their loss?

Chrysippus, who is looked upon as the most subtle interpreter of the dreams of the Stoics, has mustered up a numerous band of unknown Gods; and so unknown that we are not able to form any idea about them, though our mind seems capable of framing any image to itself in its thoughts. For he says that the divine power is placed in reason, and in the spirit and mind of universal nature; that the world, with a universal effusion of its spirit, is God; that the superior part of that spirit, which is the mind and reason, is the great principle of nature, containing and preserving the chain of all things; that the divinity is the power of fate, and the necessity of future events. He deifies fire also, and what I before called the ethereal spirit, and those elements which naturally proceed from it—water, earth, and air. He attributes divinity to the sun, moon, stars, and universal space, the grand container of all things, and to those men likewise who have obtained immortality. He maintains the sky to be what men call Jupiter; the air, which pervades the sea, to be Neptune; and the earth, Ceres. In like manner he goes through the names of the other Deities. He says that Jupiter is that immutable and eternal law which guides and directs us in our manners; and this he calls fatal necessity, the everlasting verity of future events. But none of these are of such a nature as to seem to carry any indication of divine virtue in them. These are the doctrines contained in his first book of the Nature of the Gods. In the second, he endeavors to accommodate the fables of Orpheus, Musæus, Hesiod, and Homer to what he has advanced in the first, in order that the most ancient poets, who never dreamed of these things, may seem to have been Stoics. Diogenes the Babylonian was a follower of the doctrine of Chrysippus; and in that book which he wrote, entitled “A Treatise concerning Minerva,” he separates the account of Jupiter’s bringing-forth, and the birth of that virgin, from the fabulous, and reduces it to a natural construction.

XVI. Thus far have I been rather exposing the dreams of dotards than giving the opinions of philosophers. Not much more absurd than these are the fables of the poets, who owe all their power of doing harm to the sweetness of their language; who have represented the Gods as enraged with anger and inflamed with lust; who have brought before our eyes their wars, battles, combats, wounds; their hatreds, dissensions, discords, births, deaths, complaints, and lamentations; their indulgences in all kinds of intemperance; their adulteries; their chains; their amours with mortals, and mortals begotten by immortals. To these idle and ridiculous flights of the poets we may add the prodigious stories invented by the Magi, and by the Egyptians also, which were of the same nature, together with the extravagant notions of the multitude at all times, who, from total ignorance of the truth, are always fluctuating in uncertainty.

Now, whoever reflects on the rashness and absurdity of these tenets must inevitably entertain the highest respect and veneration for Epicurus, and perhaps even rank him in the number of those beings who are the subject of this dispute; for he alone first founded the idea of the existence of the Gods on the impression which nature herself hath made on the minds of all men. For what nation, what people are there, who have not, without any learning, a natural idea, or prenotion, of a Deity? Epicurus calls this πρόληψις; that is, an antecedent conception of the fact in the mind, without which nothing can be understood, inquired after, or discoursed on; the force and advantage of which reasoning we receive from that celestial volume of Epicurus concerning the Rule and Judgment of Things.

XVII. Here, then, you see the foundation of this question clearly laid; for since it is the constant and universal opinion of mankind, independent of education, custom, or law, that there are Gods, it must necessarily follow that this knowledge is implanted in our minds, or, rather, innate in us. That opinion respecting which there is a general agreement in universal nature must infallibly be true; therefore it must be allowed that there are Gods; for in this we have the concurrence, not only of almost all philosophers, but likewise of the ignorant and illiterate. It must be also confessed that the point is established that we have naturally this idea, as I said before, or prenotion, of the existence of the Gods. As new things require new names, so that prenotion was called *πρόληψις* by Epicurus; an appellation never used before. On the same principle of reasoning, we think that the Gods are happy and immortal; for that nature which hath assured us that there are Gods has likewise imprinted in our minds the knowledge of their immortality and felicity; and if so, what Epicurus hath declared in these words is true: "That which is eternally happy cannot be burdened with any labor itself, nor can it impose any labor on another; nor can it be influenced by resentment or favor: because things which are liable to such feelings must be weak and frail." We have said enough to prove that we should worship the Gods with piety, and without superstition, if that were the only question.

For the superior and excellent nature of the Gods requires a pious adoration from men, because it is possessed of immortality and the most exalted felicity; for whatever excels has a right to veneration, and all fear of the power and anger of the Gods should be banished; for we must understand that anger and affection are inconsistent with the nature of a happy and immortal being. These apprehensions being removed, no dread of the superior powers remains. To confirm this opinion, our curiosity leads us to inquire into the form and life and action of the intellect and spirit of the Deity.

XVIII. With regard to his form, we are directed partly by nature and partly by reason. All men are told by nature that none but a human form can be ascribed to the Gods; for under what other image did it ever appear to any one either sleeping or waking? and, without having recourse to our first notions,¹⁶ reason itself declares the same; for as it is easy to conceive that the most excellent nature, either because of its happiness or immortality, should be the most beautiful, what composition of limbs, what conformation of lineaments, what form, what aspect, can be more beautiful than the human? Your sect, Lucilius (not like my friend Cotta, who sometimes says one thing and sometimes another), when they represent the divine art and workmanship in the human body, are used to describe how very completely each member is formed, not only for convenience, but also for beauty. Therefore, if the human form excels that of all other animal beings, as God himself is an animated being, he must surely be of that form which is the most beautiful. Besides, the Gods are granted to be perfectly happy; and nobody can be happy without virtue, nor can virtue exist where reason is not; and reason can reside in none but the human form; the Gods, therefore, must be acknowledged to be of human form; yet that form is not body, but something like body; nor does it contain any blood, but something like blood. Though these distinctions were more acutely devised and more artfully expressed by Epicurus than any common capacity can comprehend; yet, depending on your understanding, I shall be more brief on the subject than otherwise I should be. Epicurus, who not only discovered and understood the occult and almost hidden secrets of nature, but explained them with ease, teaches that the power and nature of

¹⁶ The *πρόληψις* of Epicurus, before mentioned, is what he here means.

the Gods is not to be discerned by the senses, but by the mind; nor are they to be considered as bodies of any solidity, or reducible to number, like those things which, because of their firmness, he calls Στερέμνια;¹⁷ but as images, perceived by similitude and transition. As infinite kinds of those images result from innumerable individuals, and centre in the Gods, our minds and understanding are directed towards and fixed with the greatest delight on them, in order to comprehend what that happy and eternal essence is.

XIX. Surely the mighty power of the Infinite Being is most worthy our great and earnest contemplation; the nature of which we must necessarily understand to be such that everything in it is made to correspond completely to some other answering part. This is called by Epicurus ἰσονομία; that is to say, an equal distribution or even disposition of things. From hence he draws this inference, that, as there is such a vast multitude of mortals, there cannot be a less number of immortals; and if those which perish are innumerable, those which are preserved ought also to be countless. Your sect, Balbus, frequently ask us how the Gods live, and how they pass their time? Their life is the most happy, and the most abounding with all kinds of blessings, which can be conceived. They do nothing. They are embarrassed with no business; nor do they perform any work. They rejoice in the possession of their own wisdom and virtue. They are satisfied that they shall ever enjoy the fulness of eternal pleasures.

XX. Such a Deity may properly be called happy; but yours is a most laborious God. For let us suppose the world a Deity—what can be a more uneasy state than, without the least cessation, to be whirled about the axle-tree of heaven with a surprising celerity? But nothing can be happy that is not at ease. Or let us suppose a Deity residing in the world, who directs and governs it, who preserves the courses of the stars, the changes of the seasons, and the vicissitudes and orders of things, surveying the earth and the sea, and accommodating them to the advantage and necessities of man. Truly this Deity is embarrassed with a very troublesome and laborious office. We make a happy life to consist in a tranquillity of mind, a perfect freedom from care, and an exemption from all employment. The philosopher from whom we received all our knowledge has taught us that the world was made by nature; that there was no occasion for a workhouse to frame it in; and that, though you deny the possibility of such a work without divine skill, it is so easy to her, that she has made, does make, and will make innumerable worlds. But, because you do not conceive that nature is able to produce such effects without some rational aid, you are forced, like the tragic poets, when you cannot wind up your argument in any other way, to have recourse to a Deity, whose assistance you would not seek, if you could view that vast and unbounded magnitude of regions in all parts; where the mind, extending and spreading itself, travels so far and wide that it can find no end, no extremity to stop at. In this immensity of breadth, length, and height, a most boundless company of innumerable atoms are fluttering about, which, notwithstanding the interposition of a void space, meet and cohere, and continue clinging to one another; and by this union these modifications and forms of things arise, which, in your opinions, could not possibly be made without the help of bellows and anvils. Thus you have imposed on us an eternal master, whom we must dread day and night. For who can be free

¹⁷ Στερέμνια is the word which Epicurus used to distinguish between those objects which are perceptible to sense, and those which are imperceptible; as the essence of the Divine Being, and the various operations of the divine power.

from fear of a Deity who foresees, regards, and takes notice of everything; one who thinks all things his own; a curious, ever-busy God?

Hence first arose your Εἰμαρμένη, as you call it, your fatal necessity; so that, whatever happens, you affirm that it flows from an eternal chain and continuance of causes. Of what value is this philosophy, which, like old women and illiterate men, attributes everything to fate? Then follows your μαντική, in Latin called *divinatio*, divination; which, if we would listen to you, would plunge us into such superstition that we should fall down and worship your inspectors into sacrifices, your augurs, your soothsayers, your prophets, and your fortune-tellers.

Epicurus having freed us from these terrors and restored us to liberty, we have no dread of those beings whom we have reason to think entirely free from all trouble themselves, and who do not impose any on others. We pay our adoration, indeed, with piety and reverence to that essence which is above all excellence and perfection. But I fear my zeal for this doctrine has made me too prolix. However, I could not easily leave so eminent and important a subject unfinished, though I must confess I should rather endeavor to hear than speak so long.

XXI. Cotta, with his usual courtesy, then began. Velleius, says he, were it not for something which you have advanced, I should have remained silent; for I have often observed, as I did just now upon hearing you, that I cannot so easily conceive why a proposition is true as why it is false. Should you ask me what I take the nature of the Gods to be, I should perhaps make no answer. But if you should ask whether I think it to be of that nature which you have described, I should answer that I was as far as possible from agreeing with you. However, before I enter on the subject of your discourse and what you have advanced upon it, I will give you my opinion of yourself. Your intimate friend, L. Crassus, has been often heard by me to say that you were beyond all question superior to all our learned Romans; and that few Epicureans in Greece were to be compared to you. But as I knew what a wonderful esteem he had for you, I imagined that might make him the more lavish in commendation of you. Now, however, though I do not choose to praise any one when present, yet I must confess that I think you have delivered your thoughts clearly on an obscure and very intricate subject; that you are not only copious in your sentiments, but more elegant in your language than your sect generally are. When I was at Athens, I went often to hear Zeno, by the advice of Philo, who used to call him the chief of the Epicureans; partly, probably, in order to judge more easily how completely those principles could be refuted after I had heard them stated by the most learned of the Epicureans. And, indeed, he did not speak in any ordinary manner; but, like you, with clearness, gravity, and elegance; yet what frequently gave me great uneasiness when I heard him, as it did while I attended to you, was to see so excellent a genius falling into such frivolous (excuse my freedom), not to say foolish, doctrines. However, I shall not at present offer anything better; for, as I said before, we can in most subjects, especially in physics, sooner discover what is not true than what is.

XXII. If you should ask me what God is, or what his character and nature are, I should follow the example of Simonides, who, when Hiero the tyrant proposed the same question to him, desired a day to consider of it. When he required his answer the next day, Simonides begged two days more; and as he kept constantly desiring double the number which he had required before instead of giving his answer, Hiero, with surprise, asked him his meaning in doing so: "Because," says he, "the longer I meditate on it, the more obscure it appears to me." Simonides, who was not only a delightful poet, but reputed a wise and learned man in other branches of knowledge,

found, I suppose, so many acute and refined arguments occurring to him, that he was doubtful which was the truest, and therefore despaired of discovering any truth.

But does your Epicurus (for I had rather contend with him than with you) say anything that is worthy the name of philosophy, or even of common-sense?

In the question concerning the nature of the Gods, his first inquiry is, whether there are Gods or not. It would be dangerous, I believe, to take the negative side before a public auditory; but it is very safe in a discourse of this kind, and in this company. I, who am a priest, and who think that religions and ceremonies ought sacredly to be maintained, am certainly desirous to have the existence of the Gods, which is the principal point in debate, not only fixed in opinion, but proved to a demonstration; for many notions flow into and disturb the mind which sometimes seem to convince us that there are none. But see how candidly I will behave to you: as I shall not touch upon those tenets you hold in common with other philosophers, consequently I shall not dispute the existence of the Gods, for that doctrine is agreeable to almost all men, and to myself in particular; but I am still at liberty to find fault with the reasons you give for it, which I think are very insufficient.

XXIII. You have said that the general assent of men of all nations and all degrees is an argument strong enough to induce us to acknowledge the being of the Gods. This is not only a weak, but a false, argument; for, first of all, how do you know the opinions of all nations? I really believe there are many people so savage that they have no thoughts of a Deity. What think you of Diagoras, who was called the atheist; and of Theodorus after him? Did not they plainly deny the very essence of a Deity? Protagoras of Abdera, whom you just now mentioned, the greatest sophist of his age, was banished by order of the Athenians from their city and territories, and his books were publicly burned, because these words were in the beginning of his treatise concerning the Gods: "I am unable to arrive at any knowledge whether there are, or are not, any Gods." This treatment of him, I imagine, restrained many from professing their disbelief of a Deity, since the doubt of it only could not escape punishment. What shall we say of the sacrilegious, the impious, and the perjured? If Tubulus Lucius, Lupus, or Carbo the son of Neptune, as Lucilius says, had believed that there were Gods, would either of them have carried his perjuries and impieties to such excess? Your reasoning, therefore, to confirm your assertion is not so conclusive as you think it is. But as this is the manner in which other philosophers have argued on the same subject, I will take no further notice of it at present; I rather choose to proceed to what is properly your own.

I allow that there are Gods. Instruct me, then, concerning their origin; inform me where they are, what sort of body, what mind, they have, and what is their course of life; for these I am desirous of knowing. You attribute the most absolute power and efficacy to atoms. Out of them you pretend that everything is made. But there are no atoms, for there is nothing without body; every place is occupied by body, therefore there can be no such thing as a vacuum or an atom.

XXIV. I advance these principles of the naturalists without knowing whether they are true or false; yet they are more like truth than those statements of yours; for they are the absurdities in which Democritus, or before him Leucippus, used to indulge, saying that there are certain light corpuscles—some smooth, some rough, some round, some square, some crooked and bent as bows—which by a fortuitous concurrence made heaven and earth, without the influence of any natural power. This opinion, C. Velleius, you have brought down to these our times; and you would

sooner be deprived of the greatest advantages of life than of that authority; for before you were acquainted with those tenets, you thought that you ought to profess yourself an Epicurean; so that it was necessary that you should either embrace these absurdities or lose the philosophical character which you had taken upon you; and what could bribe you to renounce the Epicurean opinion? Nothing, you say, can prevail on you to forsake the truth and the sure means of a happy life. But is that the truth? for I shall not contest your happy life, which you think the Deity himself does not enjoy unless he languishes in idleness. But where is truth? Is it in your innumerable worlds, some of which are rising, some falling, at every moment of time? Or is it in your atomical corpuscles, which form such excellent works without the direction of any natural power or reason? But I was forgetting my liberality, which I had promised to exert in your case, and exceeding the bounds which I at first proposed to myself. Granting, then, everything to be made of atoms, what advantage is that to your argument? For we are searching after the nature of the Gods; and allowing them to be made of atoms, they cannot be eternal, because whatever is made of atoms must have had a beginning: if so, there were no Gods till there was this beginning; and if the Gods have had a beginning, they must necessarily have an end, as you have before contended when you were discussing Plato's world. Where, then, is your beatitude and immortality, in which two words you say that God is expressed, the endeavor to prove which reduces you to the greatest perplexities? For you said that God had no body, but something like body; and no blood, but something like blood.

XXV. It is a frequent practice among you, when you assert anything that has no resemblance to truth, and wish to avoid reprehension, to advance something else which is absolutely and utterly impossible, in order that it may seem to your adversaries better to grant that point which has been a matter of doubt than to keep on pertinaciously contradicting you on every point: like Epicurus, who, when he found that if his atoms were allowed to descend by their own weight, our actions could not be in our own power, because their motions would be certain and necessary, invented an expedient, which escaped Democritus, to avoid necessity. He says that when the atoms descend by their own weight and gravity, they move a little obliquely. Surely, to make such an assertion as this is what one ought more to be ashamed of than the acknowledging ourselves unable to defend the proposition. His practice is the same against the logicians, who say that in all propositions in which yes or no is required, one of them must be true; he was afraid that if this were granted, then, in such a proposition as "Epicurus will be alive or dead to-morrow," either one or the other must necessarily be admitted; therefore he absolutely denied the necessity of yes or no. Can anything show stupidity in a greater degree? Zeno,¹⁸ being pressed by Arcesilas, who pronounced all things to be false which are perceived by the senses, said that some things were false, but not all. Epicurus was afraid that if any one thing seen should be false, nothing could be true; and therefore he asserted all the senses to be infallible directors of truth. Nothing can be more rash than this; for by endeavoring to repel a light stroke, he receives a heavy blow. On the subject of the nature of the Gods, he falls into the same errors. While he would avoid the concretion of individual bodies, lest death and dissolution should be the consequence, he denies that the Gods have body, but says they have something like body; and says they have no blood, but something like blood.

¹⁸ Zeno here mentioned is not the same that Cotta spoke of before. This was the founder of the Stoics. The other was an Epicurean philosopher whom he had heard at Athens.

XXVI. It seems an unaccountable thing how one soothsayer can refrain from laughing when he sees another. It is yet a greater wonder that you can refrain from laughing among yourselves. It is no body, but something like body! I could understand this if it were applied to statues made of wax or clay; but in regard to the Deity, I am not able to discover what is meant by a quasi-body or quasi-blood. Nor indeed are you, Velleius, though you will not confess so much. For those precepts are delivered to you as dictates which Epicurus carelessly blundered out; for he boasted, as we see in his writings, that he had no instructor, which I could easily believe without his public declaration of it, for the same reason that I could believe the master of a very bad edifice if he were to boast that he had no architect but himself: for there is nothing of the Academy, nothing of the Lyceum, in his doctrine; nothing but puerilities. He might have been a pupil of Xenocrates. O ye immortal Gods, what a teacher was he! And there are those who believe that he actually was his pupil; but he says otherwise, and I shall give more credit to his word than to another's. He confesses that he was a pupil of a certain disciple of Plato, one Pamphilus, at Samos; for he lived there when he was young, with his father and his brothers. His father, Neocles, was a farmer in those parts; but as the farm, I suppose, was not sufficient to maintain him, he turned school-master; yet Epicurus treats this Platonic philosopher with wonderful contempt, so fearful was he that it should be thought he had ever had any instruction. But it is well known he had been a pupil of Nausiphanes, the follower of Democritus; and since he could not deny it, he loaded him with insults in abundance. If he never heard a lecture on these Democritean principles, what lectures did he ever hear? What is there in Epicurus's physics that is not taken from Democritus? For though he altered some things, as what I mentioned before of the oblique motions of the atoms, yet most of his doctrines are the same; his atoms—his vacuum—his images—infinity of space—innumerable worlds, their rise and decay—and almost every part of natural learning that he treats of.

Now, do you understand what is meant by quasi-body and quasi-blood? For I not only acknowledge that you are a better judge of it than I am, but I can bear it without envy. If any sentiments, indeed, are communicated without obscurity, what is there that Velleius can understand and Cotta not? I know what body is, and what blood is; but I cannot possibly find out the meaning of quasi-body and quasi-blood. Not that you intentionally conceal your principles from me, as Pythagoras did his from those who were not his disciples; or that you are intentionally obscure, like Heraclitus. But the truth is (which I may venture to say in this company), you do not understand them yourself.

XXVII. This, I perceive, is what you contend for, that the Gods have a certain figure that has nothing concrete, nothing solid, nothing of express substance, nothing prominent in it; but that it is pure, smooth, and transparent. Let us suppose the same with the Venus of Cos, which is not a body, but the representation of a body; nor is the red, which is drawn there and mixed with the white, real blood, but a certain resemblance of blood; so in Epicurus's Deity there is no real substance, but the resemblance of substance.

Let me take for granted that which is perfectly unintelligible; then tell me what are the lineaments and figures of these sketched-out Deities. Here you have plenty of arguments by which you would show the Gods to be in human form. The first is, that our minds are so anticipated and prepossessed, that whenever we think of a Deity the human shape occurs to us. The next is, that as the divine nature excels all things, so it

ought to be of the most beautiful form, and there is no form more beautiful than the human; and the third is, that reason cannot reside in any other shape.

First, let us consider each argument separately. You seem to me to assume a principle, despotically I may say, that has no manner of probability in it. Who was ever so blind, in contemplating these subjects, as not to see that the Gods were represented in human form, either by the particular advice of wise men, who thought by those means the more easily to turn the minds of the ignorant from a depravity of manners to the worship of the Gods; or through superstition, which was the cause of their believing that when they were paying adoration to these images they were approaching the Gods themselves. These conceits were not a little improved by the poets, painters, and artificers; for it would not have been very easy to represent the Gods planning and executing any work in another form, and perhaps this opinion arose from the idea which mankind have of their own beauty. But do not you, who are so great an adept in physics, see what a soothing flatterer, what a sort of procuress, nature is to herself? Do you think there is any creature on the land or in the sea that is not highly delighted with its own form? If it were not so, why would not a bull become enamored of a mare, or a horse of a cow? Do you believe an eagle, a lion, or a dolphin prefers any shape to its own? If nature, therefore, has instructed us in the same manner, that nothing is more beautiful than man, what wonder is it that we, for that reason, should imagine the Gods are of the human form? Do you suppose if beasts were endowed with reason that every one would not give the prize of beauty to his own species?

XXVIII. Yet, by Hercules (I speak as I think)! though I am fond enough of myself, I dare not say that I excel in beauty that bull which carried Europa. For the question here is not concerning our genius and elocution, but our species and figure. If we could make and assume to ourselves any form, would you be unwilling to resemble the sea-triton as he is painted supported swimming on sea-monsters whose bodies are partly human? Here I touch on a difficult point; for so great is the force of nature that there is no man who would not choose to be like a man, nor, indeed, any ant that would not be like an ant. But like what man? For how few can pretend to beauty! When I was at Athens, the whole flock of youths afforded scarcely one. You laugh, I see; but what I tell you is the truth. Nay, to us who, after the examples of ancient philosophers, delight in boys, defects are often pleasing. Alcæus was charmed with a wart on a boy's knuckle; but a wart is a blemish on the body; yet it seemed a beauty to him. Q. Catulus, my friend and colleague's father, was enamored with your fellow-citizen Roscius, on whom he wrote these verses:

As once I stood to hail the rising day,
Roscius appearing on the left I spied:
Forgive me, Gods, if I presume to say
The mortal's beauty with th' immortal vied.

Roscius more beautiful than a God! yet he was then, as he now is, squint-eyed. But what signifies that, if his defects were beauties to Catulus?

XXIX. I return to the Gods. Can we suppose any of them to be squint-eyed, or even to have a cast in the eye? Have they any warts? Are any of them hook-nosed, flap-eared, beetle-browed, or jolt-headed, as some of us are? Or are they free from imperfections? Let us grant you that. Are they all alike in the face? For if they are many, then one must necessarily be more beautiful than another, and then there must be some Deity not absolutely most beautiful. Or if their faces are all alike, there

would be an Academy¹⁹ in heaven; for if one God does not differ from another, there is no possibility of knowing or distinguishing them.

What if your assertion, Velleius, proves absolutely false, that no form occurs to us, in our contemplations on the Deity, but the human? Will you, notwithstanding that, persist in the defence of such an absurdity? Supposing that form occurs to us, as you say it does, and we know Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Neptune, Vulcan, Apollo, and the other Deities, by the countenance which painters and statuaries have given them, and not only by their countenances, but by their decorations, their age, and attire; yet the Egyptians, the Syrians, and almost all barbarous nations,²⁰ are without such distinctions. You may see a greater regard paid by them to certain beasts than by us to the most sacred temples and images of the Gods; for many shrines have been rifled, and images of the Deities have been carried from their most sacred places by us; but we never heard that an Egyptian offered any violence to a crocodile, an ibis, or a cat. What do you think, then? Do not the Egyptians esteem their sacred bull, their Apis, as a Deity? Yes, by Hercules! as certainly as you do our protectress Juno, whom you never behold, even in your dreams, without a goat-skin, a spear, a shield, and broad sandals. But the Grecian Juno of Argos and the Roman Juno are not represented in this manner; so that the Grecians, the Lanuvinians, and we, ascribe different forms to Juno; and our Capitoline Jupiter is not the same with the Jupiter Ammon of the Africans.

XXX. Therefore, ought not a natural philosopher—that is, an inquirer into the secrets of nature—to be ashamed of seeking a testimony to truth from minds prepossessed by custom? According to the rule you have laid down, it may be said that Jupiter is always bearded, Apollo always beardless; that Minerva has gray and Neptune azure eyes; and, indeed, we must then honor that Vulcan at Athens, made by Alcamenes, whose lameness through his thin robes appears to be no deformity. Shall we, therefore, receive a lame Deity because we have such an account of him?

Consider, likewise, that the Gods go by what names we give them. Now, in the first place, they have as many names as men have languages; for Vulcan is not called Vulcan in Italy, Africa, or Spain, as you are called Velleius in all countries. Besides, the Gods are innumerable, though the list of their names is of no great length even in the records of our priests. Have they no names? You must necessarily confess, indeed, they have none; for what occasion is there for different names if their persons are alike?

How much more laudable would it be, Velleius, to acknowledge that you do not know what you do not know than to follow a man whom you must despise! Do you think the Deity is like either me or you? You do not really think he is like either of us. What is to be done, then? Shall I call the sun, the moon, or the sky a Deity? If so, they are consequently happy. But what pleasures can they enjoy? And they are wise too. But how can wisdom reside in such shapes? These are your own principles. Therefore, if they are not of human form, as I have proved, and if you cannot persuade yourself that they are of any other, why are you cautious of denying absolutely the being of any Gods? You dare not deny it—which is very prudent in you, though here you are not afraid of the people, but of the Gods themselves. I have known Epicureans who reverence²¹ even the least images of the Gods, though I perceive it to be the opinion

¹⁹ That is, there would be the same uncertainty in heaven as is among the Academics.

²⁰ Those nations which were neither Greek nor Roman.

²¹ *Sigilla numerantes* is the common reading; but P. Manucius proposes *venerantes*, which I choose as the better of the two, and in which sense I have translated it.

of some that Epicurus, through fear of offending against the Athenian laws, has allowed a Deity in words and destroyed him in fact; so in those his select and short sentences, which are called by you *κυρία δόξαι*,²² this, I think, is the first: "That being which is happy and immortal is not burdened with any labor, and does not impose any on any one else."

XXXI. In his statement of this sentence, some think that he avoided speaking clearly on purpose, though it was manifestly without design. But they judge ill of a man who had not the least art. It is doubtful whether he means that there is any being happy and immortal, or that if there is any being happy, he must likewise be immortal. They do not consider that he speaks here, indeed, ambiguously; but in many other places both he and Metrodorus explain themselves as clearly as you have done. But he believed there are Gods; nor have I ever seen any one who was more exceedingly afraid of what he declared ought to be no objects of fear, namely, death and the Gods, with the apprehensions of which the common rank of people are very little affected; but he says that the minds of all mortals are terrified by them. Many thousands of men commit robberies in the face of death; others rifle all the temples they can get into: such as these, no doubt, must be greatly terrified, the one by the fears of death, and the others by the fear of the Gods.

But since you dare not (for I am now addressing my discourse to Epicurus himself) absolutely deny the existence of the Gods, what hinders you from ascribing a divine nature to the sun, the world, or some eternal mind? I never, says he, saw wisdom and a rational soul in any but a human form. What! did you ever observe anything like the sun, the moon, or the five moving planets? The sun, terminating his course in two extreme parts of one circle,²³ finishes his annual revolutions. The moon, receiving her light from the sun, completes the same course in the space of a month.²⁴ The five planets in the same circle, some nearer, others more remote from the earth, begin the same courses together, and finish them in different spaces of time. Did you ever observe anything like this, Epicurus? So that, according to you, there can be neither sun, moon, nor stars, because nothing can exist but what we have touched or seen.²⁵ What! have you ever seen the Deity himself? Why else do you believe there is any? If this doctrine prevails, we must reject all that history relates or reason discovers; and the people who inhabit inland countries must not believe there is such a thing as the sea. This is so narrow a way of thinking that if you had been born in Seriphus, and never had been from out of that island, where you had frequently been in the habit of seeing little hares and foxes, you would not, therefore, believe that there are such beasts as lions and panthers; and if any one should describe an elephant to you, you would think that he designed to laugh at you.

XXXII. You indeed, Velleius, have concluded your argument, not after the manner of your own sect, but of the logicians, to which your people are utter strangers. You have taken it for granted that the Gods are happy. I allow it. You say that without virtue no one can be happy. I willingly concur with you in this also. You likewise say that virtue cannot reside where reason is not. That I must necessarily allow. You add, moreover, that reason cannot exist but in a human form. Who, do you think, will

²² Fundamental doctrines.

²³ That is, the zodiac.

²⁴ The moon, as well as the sun, is indeed in the zodiac, but she does not measure the same course in a month. She moves in another line of the zodiac nearer the earth.

²⁵ According to the doctrines of Epicurus, none of these bodies themselves are clearly seen, but *simulacra ex corporibus effluentia*.

admit that? If it were true, what occasion was there to come so gradually to it? And to what purpose? You might have answered it on your own authority. I perceive your gradations from happiness to virtue, and from virtue to reason; but how do you come from reason to human form? There, indeed, you do not descend by degrees, but precipitately.

Nor can I conceive why Epicurus should rather say the Gods are like men than that men are like the Gods. You ask what is the difference; for, say you, if this is like that, that is like this. I grant it; but this I assert, that the Gods could not take their form from men; for the Gods always existed, and never had a beginning, if they are to exist eternally; but men had a beginning: therefore that form, of which the immortal Gods are, must have had existence before mankind; consequently, the Gods should not be said to be of human form, but our form should be called divine. However, let this be as you will. I now inquire how this extraordinary good fortune came about; for you deny that reason had any share in the formation of things. But still, what was this extraordinary fortune? Whence proceeded that happy concourse of atoms which gave so sudden a rise to men in the form of Gods? Are we to suppose the divine seed fell from heaven upon earth, and that men sprung up in the likeness of their celestial sires? I wish you would assert it; for I should not be unwilling to acknowledge my relation to the Gods. But you say nothing like it; no, our resemblance to the Gods, it seems, was by chance. Must I now seek for arguments to refute this doctrine seriously? I wish I could as easily discover what is true as I can overthrow what is false.

XXXIII. You have enumerated with so ready a memory, and so copiously, the opinions of philosophers, from Thales the Milesian, concerning the nature of the Gods, that I am surprised to see so much learning in a Roman. But do you think they were all madmen who thought that a Deity could by some possibility exist without hands and feet? Does not even this consideration have weight with you when you consider what is the use and advantage of limbs in men, and lead you to admit that the Gods have no need of them? What necessity can there be of feet, without walking; or of hands, if there is nothing to be grasped? The same may be asked of the other parts of the body, in which nothing is vain, nothing useless, nothing superfluous; therefore we may infer that no art can imitate the skill of nature. Shall the Deity, then, have a tongue, and not speak—teeth, palate, and jaws, though he will have no use for them? Shall the members which nature has given to the body for the sake of generation be useless to the Deity? Nor would the internal parts be less superfluous than the external. What comeliness is there in the heart, the lungs, the liver, and the rest of them, abstracted from their use? I mention these because you place them in the Deity on account of the beauty of the human form.

Depending on these dreams, not only Epicurus, Metrodorus, and Hermachus declaimed against Pythagoras, Plato, and Empedocles, but that little harlot Leontium presumed to write against Theophrastus: indeed, she had a neat Attic style; but yet, to think of her arguing against Theophrastus! So much did the garden of Epicurus²⁶ abound with these liberties, and, indeed, you are always complaining against them. Zeno wrangled. Why need I mention Albutius? Nothing could be more elegant or humane than Phædrus; yet a sharp expression would disgust the old man. Epicurus treated Aristotle with great contumely. He foully slandered Phædo, the disciple of Socrates. He pelted Timocrates, the brother of his companion Metrodorus, with whole volumes, because he disagreed with him in some trifling point of

²⁶ Epicurus taught his disciples in a garden.

philosophy. He was ungrateful even to Democritus, whose follower he was; and his master Nausiphanes, from whom he learned nothing, had no better treatment from him.

XXXIV. Zeno gave abusive language not only to those who were then living, as Apollodorus, Syllus, and the rest, but he called Socrates, who was the father of philosophy, the Attic buffoon, using the Latin word *Scurra*. He never called Chrysippus by any name but Chesippus. And you yourself a little before, when you were numbering up a senate, as we may call them, of philosophers, scrupled not to say that the most eminent men talked like foolish, visionary dotards. Certainly, therefore, if they have all erred in regard to the nature of the Gods, it is to be feared there are no such beings. What you deliver on that head are all whimsical notions, and not worthy the consideration even of old women. For you do not seem to be in the least aware what a task you draw on yourselves, if you should prevail on us to grant that the same form is common to Gods and men. The Deity would then require the same trouble in dressing, and the same care of the body, that mankind does. He must walk, run, lie down, lean, sit, hold, speak, and discourse. You need not be told the consequence of making the Gods male and female.

Therefore I cannot sufficiently wonder how this chief of yours came to entertain these strange opinions. But you constantly insist on the certainty of this tenet, that the Deity is both happy and immortal. Supposing he is so, would his happiness be less perfect if he had not two feet? Or cannot that blessedness or beatitude—call it which you will (they are both harsh terms, but we must mollify them by use)—can it not, I say, exist in that sun, or in this world, or in some eternal mind that has not human shape or limbs? All you say against it is, that you never saw any happiness in the sun or the world. What, then? Did you ever see any world but this? No, you will say. Why, therefore, do you presume to assert that there are not only six hundred thousand worlds, but that they are innumerable? Reason tells you so. Will not reason tell you likewise that as, in our inquiries into the most excellent nature, we find none but the divine nature can be happy and eternal, so the same divine nature surpasses us in excellence of mind; and as in mind, so in body? Why, therefore, as we are inferior in all other respects, should we be equal in form? For human virtue approaches nearer to the divinity than human form.

XXXV. To return to the subject I was upon. What can be more childish than to assert that there are no such creatures as are generated in the Red Sea or in India? The most curious inquirer cannot arrive at the knowledge of all those creatures which inhabit the earth, sea, fens, and rivers; and shall we deny the existence of them because we never saw them? That similitude which you are so very fond of is nothing to the purpose. Is not a dog like a wolf? And, as Ennius says,

The monkey, filthiest beast, how like to man!

Yet they differ in nature. No beast has more sagacity than an elephant; yet where can you find any of a larger size? I am speaking here of beasts. But among men, do we not see a disparity of manners in persons very much alike, and a similitude of manners in persons unlike? If this sort of argument were once to prevail, Velleius, observe what it would lead to. You have laid it down as certain that reason cannot possibly reside in any but the human form. Another may affirm that it can exist in none but a terrestrial being; in none but a being that is born, that grows up, and receives instruction, and that consists of a soul, and an infirm and perishable body; in short, in none but a mortal man. But if you decline those opinions, why should a single

form disturb you? You perceive that man is possessed of reason and understanding, with all the infirmities which I have mentioned interwoven with his being; abstracted from which, you nevertheless know God, you say, if the lineaments do but remain. This is not talking considerately, but at a venture; for surely you did not think what an encumbrance anything superfluous or useless is, not only in a man, but a tree. How troublesome it is to have a finger too much! And why so? Because neither use nor ornament requires more than five; but your Deity has not only a finger more than he wants, but a head, a neck, shoulders, sides, a paunch, back, hams, hands, feet, thighs, and legs. Are these parts necessary to immortality? Are they conducive to the existence of the Deity? Is the face itself of use? One would rather say so of the brain, the heart, the lights, and the liver; for these are the seats of life. The features of the face contribute nothing to the preservation of it.

XXXVI. You censured those who, beholding those excellent and stupendous works, the world, and its respective parts—the heaven, the earth, the seas—and the splendor with which they are adorned; who, contemplating the sun, moon, and stars; and who, observing the maturity and changes of the seasons, and vicissitudes of times, inferred from thence that there must be some excellent and eminent essence that originally made, and still moves, directs, and governs them. Suppose they should mistake in their conjecture, yet I see what they aim at. But what is that great and noble work which appears to you to be the effect of a divine mind, and from which you conclude that there are Gods? “I have,” say you, “a certain information of a Deity imprinted in my mind.” Of a bearded Jupiter, I suppose, and a helmeted Minerva.

But do you really imagine them to be such? How much better are the notions of the ignorant vulgar, who not only believe the Deities have members like ours, but that they make use of them; and therefore they assign them a bow and arrows, a spear, a shield, a trident, and lightning; and though they do not behold the actions of the Gods, yet they cannot entertain a thought of a Deity doing nothing. The Egyptians (so much ridiculed) held no beasts to be sacred, except on account of some advantage which they had received from them. The ibis, a very large bird, with strong legs and a horny long beak, destroys a great number of serpents. These birds keep Egypt from pestilential diseases by killing and devouring the flying serpents brought from the deserts of Lybia by the south-west wind, which prevents the mischief that may attend their biting while alive, or any infection when dead. I could speak of the advantage of the ichneumon, the crocodile, and the cat; but I am unwilling to be tedious; yet I will conclude with observing that the barbarians paid divine honors to beasts because of the benefits they received from them; whereas your Gods not only confer no benefit, but are idle, and do no single act of any description whatever.

XXXVII. “They have nothing to do,” your teacher says. Epicurus truly, like indolent boys, thinks nothing preferable to idleness; yet those very boys, when they have a holiday, entertain themselves in some sportive exercise. But we are to suppose the Deity in such an inactive state that if he should move we may justly fear he would be no longer happy. This doctrine divests the Gods of motion and operation; besides, it encourages men to be lazy, as they are by this taught to believe that the least labor is incompatible even with divine felicity.

But let it be as you would have it, that the Deity is in the form and image of a man. Where is his abode? Where is his habitation? Where is the place where he is to be found? What is his course of life? And what is it that constitutes the happiness which you assert that he enjoys? For it seems necessary that a being who is to be happy must use and enjoy what belongs to him. And with regard to place, even those

natures which are inanimate have each their proper stations assigned to them: so that the earth is the lowest; then water is next above the earth; the air is above the water; and fire has the highest situation of all allotted to it. Some creatures inhabit the earth, some the water, and some, of an amphibious nature, live in both. There are some, also, which are thought to be born in fire, and which often appear fluttering in burning furnaces.

In the first place, therefore, I ask you, Where is the habitation of your Deity? Secondly, What motive is it that stirs him from his place, supposing he ever moves? And, lastly, since it is peculiar to animated beings to have an inclination to something that is agreeable to their several natures, what is it that the Deity affects, and to what purpose does he exert the motion of his mind and reason? In short, how is he happy? how eternal? Whichever of these points you touch upon, I am afraid you will come lamely off. For there is never a proper end to reasoning which proceeds on a false foundation; for you asserted likewise that the form of the Deity is perceptible by the mind, but not by sense; that it is neither solid, nor invariable in number; that it is to be discerned by similitude and transition, and that a constant supply of images is perpetually flowing on from innumerable atoms, on which our minds are intent; so that we from that conclude that divine nature to be happy and everlasting.

XXXVIII. What, in the name of those Deities concerning whom we are now disputing, is the meaning of all this? For if they exist only in thought, and have no solidity nor substance, what difference can there be between thinking of a Hippocentaur and thinking of a Deity? Other philosophers call every such conformation of the mind a vain motion; but you term it “the approach and entrance of images into the mind.” Thus, when I imagine that I behold T. Gracchus haranguing the people in the Capitol, and collecting their suffrages concerning M. Octavius, I call that a vain motion of the mind: but you affirm that the images of Gracchus and Octavius are present, which are only conveyed to my mind when they have arrived at the Capitol. The case is the same, you say, in regard to the Deity, with the frequent representation of which the mind is so affected that from thence it may be clearly understood that the Gods²⁷ are happy and eternal.

Let it be granted that there are images by which the mind is affected, yet it is only a certain form that occurs; and why must that form be pronounced happy? why eternal? But what are those images you talk of, or whence do they proceed? This loose manner of arguing is taken from Democritus; but he is reproved by many people for it; nor can you derive any conclusions from it: the whole system is weak and imperfect. For what can be more improbable than that the images of Homer, Archilochus, Romulus, Numa, Pythagoras, and Plato should come into my mind, and yet not in the form in which they existed? How, therefore, can they be those persons? And whose images are they? Aristotle tells us that there never was such a person as Orpheus the poet;²⁸ and it is said that the verse called Orphic verse was the invention of Cercops, a Pythagorean; yet Orpheus, that is to say, the image of him, as you will have it, often runs in my head. What is the reason that I entertain one idea of the figure of the same person, and you another? Why do we image to ourselves such

²⁷ By the word *Deus*, as often used by our author, we are to understand all the Gods in that theology then treated of, and not a single personal Deity.

²⁸ The best commentators on this passage agree that Cicero does not mean that Aristotle affirmed that there was no such person as Orpheus, but that there was no such poet, and that the verse called Orphic was said to be the invention of another. The passage of Aristotle to which Cicero here alludes has, as Dr. Davis observes, been long lost.

things as never had any existence, and which never can have, such as Scyllas and Chimæras? Why do we frame ideas of men, countries, and cities which we never saw? How is it that the very first moment that I choose I can form representations of them in my mind? How is it that they come to me, even in my sleep, without being called or sought after?

XXXIX. The whole affair, Velleius, is ridiculous. You do not impose images on our eyes only, but on our minds. Such is the privilege which you have assumed of talking nonsense with impunity. But there is, you say, a transition of images flowing on in great crowds in such a way that out of many some one at least must be perceived! I should be ashamed of my incapacity to understand this if you, who assert it, could comprehend it yourselves; for how do you prove that these images are continued in uninterrupted motion? Or, if uninterrupted, still how do you prove them to be eternal? There is a constant supply, you say, of innumerable atoms. But must they, for that reason, be all eternal? To elude this, you have recourse to equilibration (for so, with your leave, I will call your ἰσονομία),²⁹ and say that as there is a sort of nature mortal, so there must also be a sort which is immortal. By the same rule, as there are men mortal, there are men immortal; and as some arise from the earth, some must arise from the water also; and as there are causes which destroy, there must likewise be causes which preserve. Be it as you say; but let those causes preserve which have existence themselves. I cannot conceive these your Gods to have any. But how does all this face of things arise from atomic corpuscles? Were there any such atoms (as there are not), they might perhaps impel one another, and be jumbled together in their motion; but they could never be able to impart form, or figure, or color, or animation, so that you by no means demonstrate the immortality of your Deity.

XL. Let us now inquire into his happiness. It is certain that without virtue there can be no happiness; but virtue consists in action: now your Deity does nothing; therefore he is void of virtue, and consequently cannot be happy. What sort of life does he lead? He has a constant supply, you say, of good things, without any intermixture of bad. What are those good things? Sensual pleasures, no doubt; for you know no delight of the mind but what arises from the body, and returns to it. I do not suppose, Velleius, that you are like some of the Epicureans, who are ashamed of those expressions of Epicurus,³⁰ in which he openly avows that he has no idea of any good separate from wanton and obscene pleasures, which, without a blush, he names distinctly. What food, therefore, what drink, what variety of music or flowers, what kind of pleasures of touch, what odors, will you offer to the Gods to fill them with pleasures? The poets indeed provide them with banquets of nectar and ambrosia, and a Hebe or a Ganymede to serve up the cup. But what is it, Epicurus, that you do for them? For I do not see from whence your Deity should have those things, nor how he could use them. Therefore the nature of man is better constituted for a happy life than the nature of the Gods, because men enjoy various kinds of pleasures; but you look on all those pleasures as superficial which delight the senses only by a titillation, as Epicurus calls it. Where is to be the end of this trifling? Even Philo, who followed the Academy, could not bear to hear the soft and luscious delights of the Epicureans despised; for with his admirable memory he perfectly remembered and used to

²⁹ A just proportion between the different sorts of beings.

³⁰ Some give *quos non pudeat earum Epicuri vocum*; but the best copies have not *non*; nor would it be consistent with Cotta to say *quos non pudeat*, for he throughout represents Velleius as a perfect Epicurean in every article.

repeat many sentences of Epicurus in the very words in which they were written. He likewise used to quote many, which were more gross, from Metrodorus, the sage colleague of Epicurus, who blamed his brother Timocrates because he would not allow that everything which had any reference to a happy life was to be measured by the belly; nor has he said this once only, but often. You grant what I say, I perceive; for you know it to be true. I can produce the books, if you should deny it; but I am not now reproving you for referring all things to the standard of pleasure: that is another question. What I am now showing is, that your Gods are destitute of pleasure; and therefore, according to your own manner of reasoning, they are not happy.

XLI. But they are free from pain. Is that sufficient for beings who are supposed to enjoy all good things and the most supreme felicity? The Deity, they say, is constantly meditating on his own happiness, for he has no other idea which can possibly occupy his mind. Consider a little; reflect what a figure the Deity would make if he were to be idly thinking of nothing through all eternity but “It is very well with me, and I am happy;” nor do I see why this happy Deity should not fear being destroyed, since, without any intermission, he is driven and agitated by an everlasting incursion of atoms, and since images are constantly floating off from him. Your Deity, therefore, is neither happy nor eternal.

Epicurus, it seems, has written books concerning sanctity and piety towards the Gods. But how does he speak on these subjects? You would say that you were listening to Coruncanius or Scævola, the high-priests, and not to a man who tore up all religion by the roots, and who overthrew the temples and altars of the immortal Gods; not, indeed, with hands, like Xerxes, but with arguments; for what reason is there for your saying that men ought to worship the Gods, when the Gods not only do not regard men, but are entirely careless of everything, and absolutely do nothing at all?

But they are, you say, of so glorious and excellent a nature that a wise man is induced by their excellence to adore them. Can there be any glory or excellence in that nature which only contemplates its own happiness, and neither will do, nor does, nor ever did anything? Besides, what piety is due to a being from whom you receive nothing? Or how can you, or any one else, be indebted to him who bestows no benefits? For piety is only justice towards the Gods; but what right have they to it, when there is no communication whatever between the Gods and men? And sanctity is the knowledge of how we ought to worship them; but I do not understand why they are to be worshipped, if we are neither to receive nor expect any good from them.

XLII. And why should we worship them from an admiration only of that nature in which we can behold nothing excellent? and as for that freedom from superstition, which you are in the habit of boasting of so much, it is easy to be free from that feeling when you have renounced all belief in the power of the Gods; unless, indeed, you imagine that Diagoras or Theodorus, who absolutely denied the being of the Gods, could possibly be superstitious. I do not suppose that even Protagoras could, who doubted whether there were Gods or not. The opinions of these philosophers are not only destructive of superstition, which arises from a vain fear of the Gods, but of religion also, which consists in a pious adoration of them.

What think you of those who have asserted that the whole doctrine concerning the immortal Gods was the invention of politicians, whose view was to govern that part of the community by religion which reason could not influence? Are not their

opinions subversive of all religion? Or what religion did Prodicus the Chian leave to men, who held that everything beneficial to human life should be numbered among the Gods? Were not they likewise void of religion who taught that the Deities, at present the object of our prayers and adoration, were valiant, illustrious, and mighty men who arose to divinity after death? Euhemerus, whom our Ennius translated, and followed more than other authors, has particularly advanced this doctrine, and treated of the deaths and burials of the Gods; can he, then, be said to have confirmed religion, or, rather, to have totally subverted it? I shall say nothing of that sacred and august Eleusina, into whose mysteries the most distant nations were initiated, nor of the solemnities in Samothrace, or in Lemnos, secretly resorted to by night, and surrounded by thick and shady groves; which, if they were properly explained, and reduced to reasonable principles, would rather explain the nature of things than discover the knowledge of the Gods.

XLIII. Even that great man Democritus, from whose fountains Epicurus watered his little garden, seems to me to be very inferior to his usual acuteness when speaking about the nature of the Gods. For at one time he thinks that there are images endowed with divinity, inherent in the universality of things; at another, that the principles and minds contained in the universe are Gods; then he attributes divinity to animated images, employing themselves in doing us good or harm; and, lastly, he speaks of certain images of such vast extent that they encompass the whole outside of the universe; all which opinions are more worthy of the country³¹ of Democritus than of Democritus himself; for who can frame in his mind any ideas of such images? who can admire them? who can think they merit a religious adoration?

But Epicurus, when he divests the Gods of the power of doing good, extirpates all religion from the minds of men; for though he says the divine nature is the best and the most excellent of all natures, he will not allow it to be susceptible of any benevolence, by which he destroys the chief and peculiar attribute of the most perfect being. For what is better and more excellent than goodness and beneficence? To refuse your Gods that quality is to say that no man is any object of their favor, and no Gods either; that they neither love nor esteem any one; in short, that they not only give themselves no trouble about us, but even look on each other with the greatest indifference.

XLIV. How much more reasonable is the doctrine of the Stoics, whom you censure? It is one of their maxims that the wise are friends to the wise, though unknown to each other; for as nothing is more amiable than virtue, he who possesses it is worthy our love, to whatever country he belongs. But what evils do your principles bring, when you make good actions and benevolence the marks of imbecility! For, not to mention the power and nature of the Gods, you hold that even men, if they had no need of mutual assistance, would be neither courteous nor beneficent. Is there no natural charity in the dispositions of good men? The very name of love, from which friendship is derived, is dear to men;³² and if friendship is to centre in our own advantage only, without regard to him whom we esteem a friend, it cannot be called friendship, but a sort of traffic for our own profit. Pastures, lands, and herds of cattle are valued in the same manner on account of the profit we gather from them; but charity and friendship expect no return. How much more reason have we to think that the Gods, who want nothing, should love each other, and employ themselves

³¹ His country was Abdera, the natives of which were remarkable for their stupidity.

³² This passage will not admit of a translation answerable to the sense of the original. Cicero says the word *amicitia* (friendship) is derived from *amor* (love or affection).

about us! If it were not so, why should we pray to or adore them? Why do the priests preside over the altars, and the augurs over the auspices? What have we to ask of the Gods, and why do we prefer our vows to them?

But Epicurus, you say, has written a book concerning sanctity. A trifling performance by a man whose wit is not so remarkable in it, as the unrestrained license of writing which he has permitted himself; for what sanctity can there be if the Gods take no care of human affairs? Or how can that nature be called animated which neither regards nor performs anything? Therefore our friend Posidonius has well observed, in his fifth book of the Nature of the Gods, that Epicurus believed there were no Gods, and that what he had said about the immortal Gods was only said from a desire to avoid unpopularity. He could not be so weak as to imagine that the Deity has only the outward features of a simple mortal, without any real solidity; that he has all the members of a man, without the least power to use them—a certain unsubstantial pellucid being, neither favorable nor beneficial to any one, neither regarding nor doing anything. There can be no such being in nature; and as Epicurus said this plainly, he allows the Gods in words, and destroys them in fact; and if the Deity is truly such a being that he shows no favor, no benevolence to mankind, away with him! For why should I entreat him to be propitious? He can be propitious to none, since, as you say, all his favor and benevolence are the effects of imbecility.

Book II

I. When Cotta had thus concluded, Velleius replied: I certainly was inconsiderate to engage in argument with an Academician who is likewise a rhetorician. I should not have feared an Academician without eloquence, nor a rhetorician without that philosophy, however eloquent he might be; for I am never puzzled by an empty flow of words, nor by the most subtle reasonings delivered without any grace of oratory. But you, Cotta, have excelled in both. You only wanted the assembly and the judges. However, enough of this at present. Now, let us hear what Lucilius has to say, if it is agreeable to him.

I had much rather, says Balbus, hear Cotta resume his discourse, and demonstrate the true Gods with the same eloquence which he made use of to explode the false; for, on such a subject, the loose, unsettled doctrine of the Academy does not become a philosopher, a priest, a Cotta, whose opinions should be, like those we hold, firm and certain. Epicurus has been more than sufficiently refuted; but I would willingly hear your own sentiments, Cotta.

Do you forget, replies Cotta, what I at first said—that it is easier for me, especially on this point, to explain what opinions those are which I do not hold, rather than what those are which I do? Nay, even if I did feel some certainty on any particular point, yet, after having been so diffuse myself already, I would prefer now hearing you speak in your turn. I submit, says Balbus, and will be as brief as I possibly can; for as you have confuted the errors of Epicurus, my part in the dispute will be the shorter. Our sect divide the whole question concerning the immortal Gods into four parts. First, they prove that there are Gods; secondly, of what character and nature they are; thirdly, that the universe is governed by them; and, lastly, that they exercise a superintendence over human affairs. But in this present discussion let us confine ourselves to the first two articles, and defer the third and fourth till another opportunity, as they require more time to discuss. By no means, says Cotta, for we have time enough on our hands; besides that, we are now discussing a subject which should be preferred even to serious business.

II. The first point, then, says Lucilius, I think needs no discourse to prove it; for what can be so plain and evident, when we behold the heavens and contemplate the celestial bodies, as the existence of some supreme, divine intelligence, by which all these things are governed? Were it otherwise, Ennius would not, with a universal approbation, have said,

Look up to the refulgent heaven above,
Which all men call, unanimously, Jove.

This is Jupiter, the governor of the world, who rules all things with his nod, and is, as the same Ennius adds,

—of Gods and men the sire,³³

³³ This manner of speaking of Jupiter frequently occurs in Homer,
—πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε,
and has been used by Virgil and other poets since Ennius.

an omnipresent and omnipotent God. And if any one doubts this, I really do not understand why the same man may not also doubt whether there is a sun or not. For what can possibly be more evident than this? And if it were not a truth universally impressed on the minds of men, the belief in it would never have been so firm; nor would it have been, as it is, increased by length of years, nor would it have gathered strength and stability through every age. And, in truth, we see that other opinions, being false and groundless, have already fallen into oblivion by lapse of time. Who now believes in Hippocentaurs and Chimæras? Or what old woman is now to be found so weak and ignorant as to stand in fear of those infernal monsters which once so terrified mankind? For time destroys the fictions of error and opinion, while it confirms the determinations of nature and of truth. And therefore it is that, both among us and among other nations, sacred institutions and the divine worship of the Gods have been strengthened and improved from time to time. And this is not to be imputed to chance or folly, but to the frequent appearance of the Gods themselves. In the war with the Latins, when A. Posthumius, the dictator, attacked Octavius Mamilius, the Tusculan, at Regillus, Castor and Pollux were seen fighting in our army on horseback; and since that the same offspring of Tyndarus gave notice of the defeat of Perses; for as P. Vatienus, the grandfather of the present young man of that name, was coming in the night to Rome from his government of Reate, two young men on white horses appeared to him, and told him that King³⁴ Perses was that day taken prisoner. This news he carried to the senate, who immediately threw him into prison for speaking inconsiderately on a state affair; but when it was confirmed by letters from Paullus, he was recompensed by the senate with land and immunities.³⁵ Nor do we forget when the Locrians defeated the people of Crotone, in a great battle on the banks of the river Sagra, that it was known the same day at the Olympic Games. The voices of the Fauns have been often heard, and Deities have appeared in forms so visible that they have compelled every one who is not senseless, or hardened in impiety, to confess the presence of the Gods.

III. What do predictions and foreknowledge of future events indicate, but that such future events are shown, pointed out, portended, and foretold to men? From whence they are called omens, signs, portents, prodigies. But though we should esteem fabulous what is said of Mopsus,³⁶ Tiresias,³⁷ Amphiaraus,³⁸ Calchas,³⁹ and Helenus⁴⁰ (who would not have been delivered down to us as augurs even in fable if their art had been despised), may we not be sufficiently apprised of the power of the Gods by domestic examples? Will not the temerity of P. Claudius, in the first Punic war, affect us? who, when the poultry were let out of the coop and would not feed, ordered them to be thrown into the water, and, joking even upon the Gods, said, with a sneer, "Let them drink, since they will not eat;" which piece of ridicule, being

³⁴ Perses, or Perseus, the last king of Macedonia, was taken by Cnæus Octavius, the prætor, and brought as prisoner to Paullus Æmilius, 167 b.c.

³⁵ An exemption from serving in the wars, and from paying public taxes.

³⁶ Mopsus. There were two soothsayers of this name: the first was one of the Lapithæ, son of Ampycus and Chloris, called also the son of Apollo and Hienantis; the other a son of Apollo and Manto, who is said to have founded Mallus, in Asia Minor, where his oracle existed as late as the time of Strabo.

³⁷ Tiresias was the great Theban prophet at the time of the war of the Seven against Thebes.

³⁸ Amphiaraus was King of Argos (he had been one of the Argonauts also). He was killed after the war of the Seven against Thebes, which he was compelled to join in by the treachery of his wife Eriphyle, by the earth opening and swallowing him up as he was fleeing from Periclymenus.

³⁹ Calchas was the prophet of the Grecian army at the siege of Troy.

⁴⁰ Helenus was a son of Priam and Hecuba. He is represented as a prophet in the Philoctetes of Sophocles. And in the Æneid he is also represented as king of part of Epirus, and as predicting to Æneas the dangers and fortunes which awaited him.

followed by a victory over his fleet, cost him many tears, and brought great calamity on the Roman people. Did not his colleague Junius, in the same war, lose his fleet in a tempest by disregarding the auspices? Claudius, therefore, was condemned by the people, and Junius killed himself. Coelius says that P. Flaminius, from his neglect of religion, fell at Thrasimenus; a loss which the public severely felt. By these instances of calamity we may be assured that Rome owes her grandeur and success to the conduct of those who were tenacious of their religious duties; and if we compare ourselves to our neighbors, we shall find that we are infinitely distinguished above foreign nations by our zeal for religious ceremonies, though in other things we may be only equal to them, and in other respects even inferior to them.

Ought we to condemn Attius Navius's staff, with which he divided the regions of the vine to find his sow?⁴¹ I should despise it, if I were not aware that King Hostilius had carried on most important wars in deference to his auguries; but by the negligence of our nobility the discipline of the augury is now omitted, the truth of the auspices despised, and only a mere form observed; so that the most important affairs of the commonwealth, even the wars, on which the public safety depends, are conducted without any auspices; the Peremnia⁴² are discussed; no part of the Acumina⁴³ performed; no select men are called to witness to the military testaments;⁴⁴ our generals now begin their wars as soon as they have arranged the Auspicia. The force of religion was so great among our ancestors that some of their commanders have, with their faces veiled, and with the solemn, formal expressions of religion, sacrificed themselves to the immortal Gods to save their country.⁴⁵ I could mention many of the Sibylline prophecies, and many answers of the haruspices, to confirm those things, which ought not to be doubted.

IV. For example: our augurs and the Etrurian haruspices saw the truth of their art established when P. Scipio and C. Figulus were consuls; for as Tiberius Gracchus, who was a second time consul, wished to proceed to a fresh election, the first Rogator,⁴⁶ as he was collecting the suffrages, fell down dead on the spot. Gracchus nevertheless went on with the assembly, but perceiving that this accident had a religious influence on the people, he brought the affair before the senate. The senate thought fit to refer it to those who usually took cognizance of such things. The haruspices were called, and declared that the man who had acted as Rogator of the assembly had no right to do so; to which, as I have heard my father say, he replied with great warmth, Have I no right, who am consul, and augur, and favored by the Auspicia? And shall you, who are Tuscans and Barbarians, pretend that you have

⁴¹ This short passage would be very obscure to the reader without an explanation from another of Cicero's treatises. The expression here, *ad investigandum suam regiones vineæ terminavit*, which is a metaphor too bold, if it was not a sort of augural language, seems to me to have been the effect of carelessness in our great author; for Navius did not divide the regions, as he calls them, of the vine to find his sow, but to find a grape.

⁴² The Peremnia were a sort of auspices performed just before the passing a river.

⁴³ The Acumina were a military auspices, and were partly performed on the point of a spear, from which they were called Acumina.

⁴⁴ Those were called *testamenta in procinctu*, which were made by soldiers just before an engagement, in the presence of men called as witnesses.

⁴⁵ This especially refers to the Decii, one of whom devoted himself for his country in the war with the Latins, 340 b.c., and his son imitated the action in the war with the Samnites, 295 b.c. Cicero (Tusc. i. 37) says that his son did the same thing in the war with Pyrrhus at the battle of Asculum, though in other places (De Off. iii. 4) he speaks of only two Decii as having signalized themselves in this manner.

⁴⁶ The Rogator, who collected the votes, and pronounced who was the person chosen. There were two sorts of Rogators; one was the officer here mentioned, and the other was the Rogator, or speaker of the whole assembly.

authority over the Roman Auspicia, and a right to give judgment in matters respecting the formality of our assemblies? Therefore, he then commanded them to withdraw; but not long afterward he wrote from his province⁴⁷ to the college of augurs, acknowledging that in reading the books⁴⁸ he remembered that he had illegally chosen a place for his tent in the gardens of Scipio, and had afterward entered the Pomœrium, in order to hold a senate, but that in repassing the same Pomœrium he had forgotten to take the auspices; and that, therefore, the consuls had been created informally. The augurs laid the case before the senate. The senate decreed that they should resign their charge, and so they accordingly abdicated. What greater example need we seek for? The wisest, perhaps the most excellent of men, chose to confess his fault, which he might have concealed, rather than leave the public the least atom of religious guilt; and the consuls chose to quit the highest office in the State, rather than fill it for a moment in defiance of religion. How great is the reputation of the augurs!

And is not the art of the soothsayers divine? And must not every one who sees what innumerable instances of the same kind there are confess the existence of the Gods? For they who have interpreters must certainly exist themselves; now, there are interpreters of the Gods; therefore we must allow there are Gods. But it may be said, perhaps, that all predictions are not accomplished. We may as well conclude there is no art of physic, because all sick persons do not recover. The Gods show us signs of future events; if we are occasionally deceived in the results, it is not to be imputed to the nature of the Gods, but to the conjectures of men. All nations agree that there are Gods; the opinion is innate, and, as it were, engraved in the minds of all men. The only point in dispute among us is, what they are.

V. Their existence no one denies. Cleanthes, one of our sect, imputes the way in which the idea of the Gods is implanted in the minds of men to four causes. The first is that which I just now mentioned—the foreknowledge of future things. The second is the great advantages which we enjoy from the temperature of the air, the fertility of the earth, and the abundance of various benefits of other kinds. The third cause is deduced from the terror with which the mind is affected by thunder, tempests, storms, snow, hail, devastation, pestilence, earthquakes often attended with hideous noises, showers of stones, and rain like drops of blood; by rocks and sudden openings of the earth; by monstrous births of men and beasts; by meteors in the air, and blazing stars, by the Greeks called *cometæ*, by us *crinitæ*, the appearance of which, in the late Octavian war,⁴⁹ were foreboders of great calamities; by two suns, which, as I have heard my father say, happened in the consulate of Tuditanus and Aquillius, and in which year also another sun (P. Africanus) was extinguished. These things terrified mankind, and raised in them a firm belief of the existence of some celestial and divine power.

His fourth cause, and that the strongest, is drawn from the regularity of the motion and revolution of the heavens, the distinctness, variety, beauty, and order of the sun, moon, and all the stars, the appearance only of which is sufficient to convince us they are not the effects of chance; as when we enter into a house, or school, or court, and observe the exact order, discipline, and method of it, we cannot suppose that it is so regulated without a cause, but must conclude that there is some one who commands, and to whom obedience is paid. It is quite impossible for us to avoid thinking that the

⁴⁷ Which was Sardinia, as appears from one of Cicero's epistles to his brother Quintus.

⁴⁸ Their sacred books of ceremonies.

⁴⁹ The war between Octavius and Cinna, the consuls.

wonderful motions, revolutions, and order of those many and great bodies, no part of which is impaired by the countless and infinite succession of ages, must be governed and directed by some supreme intelligent being.

VI. Chrysippus, indeed, had a very penetrating genius; yet such is the doctrine which he delivers, that he seems rather to have been instructed by nature than to owe it to any discovery of his own. "If," says he, "there is anything in the universe which no human reason, ability, or power can make, the being who produced it must certainly be preferable to man. Now, celestial bodies, and all those things which proceed in any eternal order, cannot be made by man; the being who made them is therefore preferable to man. What, then, is that being but a God? If there be no such thing as a Deity, what is there better than man, since he only is possessed of reason, the most excellent of all things? But it is a foolish piece of vanity in man to think there is nothing preferable to him. There is, therefore, something preferable; consequently, there is certainly a God."

When you behold a large and beautiful house, surely no one can persuade you it was built for mice and weasels, though you do not see the master; and would it not, therefore, be most manifest folly to imagine that a world so magnificently adorned, with such an immense variety of celestial bodies of such exquisite beauty, and that the vast sizes and magnitude of the sea and land were intended as the abode of man, and not as the mansion of the immortal Gods? Do we not also plainly see this, that all the most elevated regions are the best, and that the earth is the lowest region, and is surrounded with the grossest air? so that as we perceive that in some cities and countries the capacities of men are naturally duller, from the thickness of the climate, so mankind in general are affected by the heaviness of the air which surrounds the earth, the grossest region of the world.

Yet even from this inferior intelligence of man we may discover the existence of some intelligent agent that is divine, and wiser than ourselves; for, as Socrates says in Xenophon, from whence had man his portion of understanding? And, indeed, if any one were to push his inquiries about the moisture and heat which is diffused through the human body, and the earthy kind of solidity existing in our entrails, and that soul by which we breathe, and to ask whence we derived them, it would be plain that we have received one thing from the earth, another from liquid, another from fire, and another from that air which we inhale every time that we breathe.

VII. But where did we find that which excels all these things—I mean reason, or (if you please, in other terms) the mind, understanding, thought, prudence; and from whence did we receive it? Shall the world be possessed of every other perfection, and be destitute of this one, which is the most important and valuable of all? But certainly there is nothing better, or more excellent, or more beautiful than the world; and not only there is nothing better, but we cannot even conceive anything superior to it; and if reason and wisdom are the greatest of all perfections, they must necessarily be a part of what we all allow to be the most excellent.

Who is not compelled to admit the truth of what I assert by that agreeable, uniform, and continued agreement of things in the universe? Could the earth at one season be adorned with flowers, at another be covered with snow? Or, if such a number of things regulated their own changes, could the approach and retreat of the sun in the summer and winter solstices be so regularly known and calculated? Could the flux and reflux of the sea and the height of the tides be affected by the increase or wane of the moon? Could the different courses of the stars be preserved by the uniform

movement of the whole heaven? Could these things subsist, I say, in such a harmony of all the parts of the universe without the continued influence of a divine spirit?

If these points are handled in a free and copious manner, as I purpose to do, they will be less liable to the cavils of the Academics; but the narrow, confined way in which Zeno reasoned upon them laid them more open to objection; for as running streams are seldom or never tainted, while standing waters easily grow corrupt, so a fluency of expression washes away the censures of the caviller, while the narrow limits of a discourse which is too concise is almost defenceless; for the arguments which I am enlarging upon are thus briefly laid down by Zeno:

VIII. "That which reasons is superior to that which does not; nothing is superior to the world; the world, therefore, reasons." By the same rule the world may be proved to be wise, happy, and eternal; for the possession of all these qualities is superior to the want of them; and nothing is superior to the world; the inevitable consequence of which argument is, that the world, therefore, is a Deity. He goes on: "No part of anything void of sense is capable of perception; some parts of the world have perception; the world, therefore, has sense." He proceeds, and pursues the argument closely. "Nothing," says he, "that is destitute itself of life and reason can generate a being possessed of life and reason; but the world does generate beings possessed of life and reason; the world, therefore, is not itself destitute of life and reason."

He concludes his argument in his usual manner with a simile: "If well-tuned pipes should spring out of the olive, would you have the slightest doubt that there was in the olive-tree itself some kind of skill and knowledge? Or if the plane-tree could produce harmonious lutes, surely you would infer, on the same principle, that music was contained in the plane-tree. Why, then, should we not believe the world is a living and wise being, since it produces living and wise beings out of itself?"

IX. But as I have been insensibly led into a length of discourse beyond my first design (for I said that, as the existence of the Gods was evident to all, there was no need of any long oration to prove it), I will demonstrate it by reasons deduced from the nature of things. For it is a fact that all beings which take nourishment and increase contain in themselves a power of natural heat, without which they could neither be nourished nor increase. For everything which is of a warm and fiery character is agitated and stirred up by its own motion. But that which is nourished and grows is influenced by a certain regular and equable motion. And as long as this motion remains in us, so long does sense and life remain; but the moment that it abates and is extinguished, we ourselves decay and perish.

By arguments like these, Cleanthes shows how great is the power of heat in all bodies. He observes that there is no food so gross as not to be digested in a night and a day; and that even in the excrementitious parts, which nature rejects, there remains a heat. The veins and arteries seem, by their continual quivering, to resemble the agitation of fire; and it has often been observed when the heart of an animal is just plucked from the body that it palpitates with such visible motion as to resemble the rapidity of fire. Everything, therefore, that has life, whether it be animal or vegetable, owes that life to the heat inherent in it; it is this nature of heat which contains in itself the vital power which extends throughout the whole world. This will appear more clearly on a more close explanation of this fiery quality, which pervades all things.

Every division, then, of the world (and I shall touch upon the most considerable) is sustained by heat; and first it may be observed in earthly substances that fire is

produced from stones by striking or rubbing one against another; that “the warm earth smokes”⁵⁰ when just turned up, and that water is drawn warm from well-springs; and this is most especially the case in the winter season, because there is a great quantity of heat contained in the caverns of the earth; and this becomes more dense in the winter, and on that account confines more closely the innate heat which is discoverable in the earth.

X. It would require a long dissertation, and many reasons would require to be adduced, to show that all the seeds which the earth conceives, and all those which it contains having been generated from itself, and fixed in roots and trunks, derive all their origin and increase from the temperature and regulation of heat. And that even every liquor has a mixture of heat in it is plainly demonstrated by the effusion of water; for it would not congeal by cold, nor become solid, as ice or snow, and return again to its natural state, if it were not that, when heat is applied to it, it again becomes liquefied and dissolved, and so diffuses itself. Therefore, by northern and other cold winds it is frozen and hardened, and in turn it dissolves and melts again by heat. The seas likewise, we find, when agitated by winds, grow warm, so that from this fact we may understand that there is heat included in that vast body of water; for we cannot imagine it to be external and adventitious heat, but such as is stirred up by agitation from the deep recesses of the seas; and the same thing takes place with respect to our bodies, which grow warm with motion and exercise.

And the very air itself, which indeed is the coldest element, is by no means void of heat; for there is a great quantity, arising from the exhalations of water, which appears to be a sort of steam occasioned by its internal heat, like that of boiling liquors. The fourth part of the universe is entirely fire, and is the source of the salutary and vital heat which is found in the rest. From hence we may conclude that, as all parts of the world are sustained by heat, the world itself also has such a great length of time subsisted from the same cause; and so much the more, because we ought to understand that that hot and fiery principle is so diffused over universal nature that there is contained in it a power and cause of generation and procreation, from which all animate beings, and all those creatures of the vegetable world, the roots of which are contained in the earth, must inevitably derive their origin and their increase.

XI. It is nature, consequently, that continues and preserves the world, and that, too, a nature which is not destitute of sense and reason; for in every essence that is not simple, but composed of several parts, there must be some predominant quality—as, for instance, the mind in man, and in beasts something resembling it, from which arise all the appetites and desires for anything. As for trees, and all the vegetable produce of the earth, it is thought to be in their roots. I call that the predominant quality,⁵¹ which the Greeks call ἡγεμονικόν; which must and ought to be the most excellent quality, wherever it is found. That, therefore, in which the prevailing quality of all nature resides must be the most excellent of all things, and most worthy of the power and pre-eminence over all things.

Now, we see that there is nothing in being that is not a part of the universe; and as there are sense and reason in the parts of it, there must therefore be these qualities,

⁵⁰ This, in the original, is a fragment of an old Latin verse,
—*Terram fumare calentem.*

⁵¹ The Latin word is *principatus*, which exactly corresponds with the Greek word here used by Cicero; by which is to be understood the superior, the most prevailing excellence in every kind and species of things through the universe.

and these, too, in a more energetic and powerful degree, in that part in which the predominant quality of the world is found. The world, therefore, must necessarily be possessed of wisdom; and that element, which embraces all things, must excel in perfection of reason. The world, therefore, is a God, and the whole power of the world is contained in that divine element.

The heat also of the world is more pure, clear, and lively, and, consequently, better adapted to move the senses than the heat allotted to us; and it vivifies and preserves all things within the compass of our knowledge.

It is absurd, therefore, to say that the world, which is endued with a perfect, free, pure, spirituous, and active heat, is not sensitive, since by this heat men and beasts are preserved, and move, and think; more especially since this heat of the world is itself the sole principle of agitation, and has no external impulse, but is moved spontaneously; for what can be more powerful than the world, which moves and raises that heat by which it subsists?

XII. For let us listen to Plato, who is regarded as a God among philosophers. He says that there are two sorts of motion, one innate and the other external; and that that which is moved spontaneously is more divine than that which is moved by another power. This self-motion he places in the mind alone, and concludes that the first principle of motion is derived from the mind. Therefore, since all motion arises from the heat of the world, and that heat is not moved by the effect of any external impulse, but of its own accord, it must necessarily be a mind; from whence it follows that the world is animated.

On such reasoning is founded this opinion, that the world is possessed of understanding, because it certainly has more perfections in itself than any other nature; for as there is no part of our bodies so considerable as the whole of us, so it is clear that there is no particular portion of the universe equal in magnitude to the whole of it; from whence it follows that wisdom must be an attribute of the world; otherwise man, who is a part of it, and possessed of reason, would be superior to the entire world.

And thus, if we proceed from the first rude, unfinished natures to the most superior and perfect ones, we shall inevitably come at last to the nature of the Gods. For, in the first place, we observe that those vegetables which are produced out of the earth are supported by nature, and she gives them no further supply than is sufficient to preserve them by nourishing them and making them grow. To beasts she has given sense and motion, and a faculty which directs them to what is wholesome, and prompts them to shun what is noxious to them. On man she has conferred a greater portion of her favor; inasmuch as she has added reason, by which he is enabled to command his passions, to moderate some, and to subdue others.

XIII. In the fourth and highest degree are those beings which are naturally wise and good, who from the first moment of their existence are possessed of right and consistent reason, which we must consider superior to man and deserving to be attributed to a God; that is to say, to the world, in which it is inevitable that that perfect and complete reason should be inherent. Nor is it possible that it should be said with justice that there is any arrangement of things in which there cannot be something entire and perfect. For as in a vine or in beasts we see that nature, if not prevented by some superior violence, proceeds by her own appropriate path to her destined end; and as in painting, architecture, and the other arts there is a point of perfection which is attainable, and occasionally attained, so it is even much more

necessary that in universal nature there must be some complete and perfect result arrived at. Many external accidents may happen to all other natures which may impede their progress to perfection, but nothing can hinder universal nature, because she is herself the ruler and governor of all other natures. That, therefore, must be the fourth and most elevated degree to which no other power can approach.

But this degree is that on which the nature of all things is placed; and since she is possessed of this, and she presides over all things, and is subject to no possible impediment, the world must necessarily be an intelligent and even a wise being. But how marvellously great is the ignorance of those men who dispute the perfection of that nature which encircles all things; or who, allowing it to be infinitely perfect, yet deny it to be, in the first place, animated, then reasonable, and, lastly, prudent and wise! For how without these qualities could it be infinitely perfect? If it were like vegetables, or even like beasts, there would be no more reason for thinking it extremely good than extremely bad; and if it were possessed of reason, and had not wisdom from the beginning, the world would be in a worse condition than man; for man may grow wise, but the world, if it were destitute of wisdom through an infinite space of time past, could never acquire it. Thus it would be worse than man. But as that is absurd to imagine, the world must be esteemed wise from all eternity, and consequently a Deity: since there is nothing existing that is not defective, except the universe, which is well provided, and fully complete and perfect in all its numbers and parts.

XIV. For Chrysippus says, very acutely, that as the case is made for the buckler, and the scabbard for the sword, so all things, except the universe, were made for the sake of something else. As, for instance, all those crops and fruits which the earth produces were made for the sake of animals, and animals for man; as, the horse for carrying, the ox for the plough, the dog for hunting and for a guard. But man himself was born to contemplate and imitate the world, being in no wise perfect, but, if I may so express myself, a particle of perfection; but the world, as it comprehends all, and as nothing exists that is not contained in it, is entirely perfect. In what, therefore, can it be defective, since it is perfect? It cannot want understanding and reason, for they are the most desirable of all qualities. The same Chrysippus observes also, by the use of similitudes, that everything in its kind, when arrived at maturity and perfection, is superior to that which is not—as, a horse to a colt, a dog to a puppy, and a man to a boy—so whatever is best in the whole universe must exist in some complete and perfect being. But nothing is more perfect than the world, and nothing better than virtue. Virtue, therefore, is an attribute of the world. But human nature is not perfect, and nevertheless virtue is produced in it: with how much greater reason, then, do we conceive it to be inherent in the world! Therefore the world has virtue, and it is also wise, and consequently a Deity.

XV. The divinity of the world being now clearly perceived, we must acknowledge the same divinity to be likewise in the stars, which are formed from the lightest and purest part of the ether, without a mixture of any other matter; and, being altogether hot and transparent, we may justly say they have life, sense, and understanding. And Cleanthes thinks that it may be established by the evidence of two of our senses—feeling and seeing—that they are entirely fiery bodies; for the heat and brightness of the sun far exceed any other fire, inasmuch as it enlightens the whole universe, covering such a vast extent of space, and its power is such that we perceive that it not only warms, but often even burns: neither of which it could do if it were not of a fiery quality. Since, then, says he, the sun is a fiery body, and is nourished by the vapors of

the ocean (for no fire can continue without some sustenance), it must be either like that fire which we use to warm us and dress our food, or like that which is contained in the bodies of animals.

And this fire, which the convenience of life requires, is the devourer and consumer of everything, and throws into confusion and destroys whatever it reaches. On the contrary, the corporeal heat is full of life, and salutary; and vivifies, preserves, cherishes, increases, and sustains all things, and is productive of sense; therefore, says he, there can be no doubt which of these fires the sun is like, since it causes all things in their respective kinds to flourish and arrive to maturity; and as the fire of the sun is like that which is contained in the bodies of animated beings, the sun itself must likewise be animated, and so must the other stars also, which arise out of the celestial ardor that we call the sky, or firmament.

As, then, some animals are generated in the earth, some in the water, and some in the air, Aristotle⁵² thinks it ridiculous to imagine that no animal is formed in that part of the universe which is the most capable to produce them. But the stars are situated in the ethereal space; and as this is an element the most subtle, whose motion is continual, and whose force does not decay, it follows, of necessity, that every animated being which is produced in it must be endowed with the quickest sense and the swiftest motion. The stars, therefore, being there generated, it is a natural inference to suppose them endued with such a degree of sense and understanding as places them in the rank of Gods.

XVI. For it may be observed that they who inhabit countries of a pure, clear air have a quicker apprehension and a readier genius than those who live in a thick, foggy climate. It is thought likewise that the nature of a man's diet has an effect on the mind; therefore it is probable that the stars are possessed of an excellent understanding, inasmuch as they are situated in the ethereal part of the universe, and are nourished by the vapors of the earth and sea, which are purified by their long passage to the heavens. But the invariable order and regular motion of the stars plainly manifest their sense and understanding; for all motion which seems to be conducted with reason and harmony supposes an intelligent principle, that does not act blindly, or inconsistently, or at random. And this regularity and consistent course of the stars from all eternity indicates not any natural order, for it is pregnant with sound reason, not fortune (for fortune, being a friend to change, despises consistency). It follows, therefore, that they move spontaneously by their own sense and divinity.

Aristotle also deserves high commendation for his observation that everything that moves is either put in motion by natural impulse, or by some external force, or of its own accord; and that the sun, and moon, and all the stars move; but that those things which are moved by natural impulse are either borne downward by their weight, or upward by their lightness; neither of which things could be the case with the stars, because they move in a regular circle and orbit. Nor can it be said that there is some superior force which causes the stars to be moved in a manner contrary to nature. For what superior force can there be? It follows, therefore, that their motion must be voluntary. And whoever is convinced of this must discover not only great ignorance, but great impiety likewise, if he denies the existence of the Gods; nor is the difference great whether a man denies their existence, or deprives them of all design and action; for whatever is wholly inactive seems to me not to exist at all. Their existence,

⁵² The passage of Aristotle to which Cicero here refers is lost.

therefore, appears so plain that I can scarcely think that man in his senses who denies it.

XVII. It now remains that we consider what is the character of the Gods. Nothing is more difficult than to divert our thoughts and judgment from the information of our corporeal sight, and the view of objects which our eyes are accustomed to; and it is this difficulty which has had such an influence on the unlearned, and on philosophers⁵³ also who resembled the unlearned multitude, that they have been unable to form any idea of the immortal Gods except under the clothing of the human figure; the weakness of which opinion Cotta has so well confuted that I need not add my thoughts upon it. But as the previous idea which we have of the Deity comprehends two things—first of all, that he is an animated being; secondly, that there is nothing in all nature superior to him—I do not see what can be more consistent with this idea and preconception than to attribute a mind and divinity to the world,⁵⁴ the most excellent of all beings.

Epicurus may be as merry with this notion as he pleases; a man not the best qualified for a joker, as not having the wit and sense of his country.⁵⁵ Let him say that a voluble round Deity is to him incomprehensible; yet he shall never dissuade me from a principle which he himself approves, for he is of opinion there are Gods when he allows that there must be a nature excellently perfect. But it is certain that the world is most excellently perfect: nor is it to be doubted that whatever has life, sense, reason, and understanding must excel that which is destitute of these things. It follows, then, that the world has life, sense, reason, and understanding, and is consequently a Deity. But this shall soon be made more manifest by the operation of these very things which the world causes.

XVIII. In the mean while, Velleius, let me entreat you not to be always saying that we are utterly destitute of every sort of learning. The cone, you say, the cylinder, and the pyramid, are more beautiful to you than the sphere. This is to have different eyes from other men. But suppose they are more beautiful to the sight only, which does not appear to me, for I can see nothing more beautiful than that figure which contains all others, and which has nothing rough in it, nothing offensive, nothing cut into angles, nothing broken, nothing swelling, and nothing hollow; yet as there are two forms most esteemed,⁵⁶ the globe in solids (for so the Greek word σφαῖρα, I think, should be construed), and the circle, or orb, in planes (in Greek, κύκλος); and as they only have an exact similitude of parts in which every extreme is equally distant from the centre, what can we imagine in nature to be more just and proper? But if you have never raked into this learned dust⁵⁷ to find out these things, surely, at all events, you natural philosophers must know that equality of motion and invariable order could not be preserved in any other figure. Nothing, therefore, can be more illiterate than to assert, as you are in the habit of doing, that it is doubtful whether the world is round or not, because it may possibly be of another shape, and that there are innumerable worlds of different forms; which Epicurus, if he ever had learned that two and two are equal to four, would not have said. But while he judges

⁵³ He means the Epicureans.

⁵⁴ Here the Stoic speaks too plain to be misunderstood. His world, his *mundus*, is the universe, and that universe is his great Deity, *in quo sit totius naturæ principatus*, in which the superior excellence of universal nature consists.

⁵⁵ Athens, the seat of learning and politeness, of which Balbus will not allow Epicurus to be worthy.

⁵⁶ This is Pythagoras's doctrine, as appears in Diogenes Laertius.

⁵⁷ He here alludes to mathematical and geometrical instruments.

of what is best by his palate, he does not look up to the “palace of heaven,” as Ennius calls it.

XIX. For as there are two sorts of stars,⁵⁸ one kind of which measure their journey from east to west by immutable stages, never in the least varying from their usual course, while the other completes a double revolution with an equally constant regularity; from each of these facts we demonstrate the volubility of the world (which could not possibly take place in any but a globular form) and the circular orbits of the stars. And first of all the sun, which has the chief rank among all the stars, is moved in such a manner that it fills the whole earth with its light, and illuminates alternately one part of the earth, while it leaves the other in darkness. The shadow of the earth interposing causes night; and the intervals of night are equal to those of day. And it is the regular approaches and retreats of the sun from which arise the regulated degrees of cold and heat. His annual circuit is in three hundred and sixty-five days, and nearly six hours more.⁵⁹ At one time he bends his course to the north, at another to the south, and thus produces summer and winter, with the other two seasons, one of which succeeds the decline of winter, and the other that of summer. And so to these four changes of the seasons we attribute the origin and cause of all the productions both of sea and land.

The moon completes the same course every month which the sun does in a year. The nearer she approaches to the sun, the dimmer light does she yield, and when most remote from it she shines with the fullest brilliancy; nor are her figure and form only changed in her wane, but her situation likewise, which is sometimes in the north and sometimes in the south. By this course she has a sort of summer and winter solstices; and by her influence she contributes to the nourishment and increase of animated beings, and to the ripeness and maturity of all vegetables.

XX. But most worthy our admiration is the motion of those five stars which are falsely called wandering stars; for they cannot be said to wander which keep from all eternity their approaches and retreats, and have all the rest of their motions, in one regular constant and established order. What is yet more wonderful in these stars which we are speaking of is that sometimes they appear, and sometimes they disappear; sometimes they advance towards the sun, and sometimes they retreat; sometimes they precede him, and sometimes follow him; sometimes they move faster, sometimes slower, and sometimes they do not stir in the least, but for a while stand still. From these unequal motions of the planets, mathematicians have called that the “great year”⁶⁰ in which the sun, moon, and five wandering stars, having finished their revolutions, are found in their original situation. In how long a time this is effected is much disputed, but it must be a certain and definite period. For the planet Saturn (called by the Greeks Φαίρον), which is farthest from the earth,

⁵⁸ Balbus here speaks of the fixed stars, and of the motions of the orbs of the planets. He here alludes, says M. Bonhier, to the different and diurnal motions of these stars; one sort from east to west, the other from one tropic to the other: and this is the construction which our learned and great geometrician and astronomer, Dr. Halley, made of this passage.

⁵⁹ This mensuration of the year into three hundred and sixty-five days and near six hours (by the odd hours and minutes of which, in every fifth year, the *dies intercalaris*, or leap-year, is made) could not but be known, Dr. Halley states, by Hipparchus, as appears from the remains of that great astronomer of the ancients. We are inclined to think that Julius Cæsar had divided the year, according to what we call the Julian year, before Cicero wrote this book; for we see, in the beginning of it, how pathetically he speaks of Cæsar’s usurpation.

⁶⁰ The words of Censorinus, on this occasion, are to the same effect. The opinions of philosophers concerning this great year are very different; but the institution of it is ascribed to Democritus.

finishes his course in about thirty years; and in his course there is something very singular, for sometimes he moves before the sun, sometimes he keeps behind it; at one time lying hidden in the night, at another again appearing in the morning; and ever performing the same motions in the same space of time without any alteration, so as to be for infinite ages regular in these courses. Beneath this planet, and nearer the earth, is Jupiter, called Φαέθων, which passes the same orbit of the twelve signs⁶¹ in twelve years, and goes through exactly the same variety in its course that the star of Saturn does. Next to Jupiter is the planet Mars (in Greek, Πυρόεις), which finishes its revolution through the same orbit as the two previously mentioned,⁶² in twenty-four months, wanting six days, as I imagine. Below this is Mercury (called by the Greeks Στίλβων), which performs the same course in little less than a year, and is never farther distant from the sun than the space of one sign, whether it precedes or follows it. The lowest of the five planets, and nearest the earth, is that of Venus (called in Greek Φωσφόρος). Before the rising of the sun, it is called the morning-star, and after the setting, the evening-star. It has the same revolution through the zodiac, both as to latitude and longitude, with the other planets, in a year, and never is more than two⁶³ signs from the sun, whether it precedes or follows it.

XXI. I cannot, therefore, conceive that this constant course of the planets, this just agreement in such various motions through all eternity, can be preserved without a mind, reason, and consideration; and since we may perceive these qualities in the stars, we cannot but place them in the rank of Gods. Those which are called the fixed stars have the same indications of reason and prudence. Their motion is daily, regular, and constant. They do not move with the sky, nor have they an adhesion to the firmament, as they who are ignorant of natural philosophy affirm. For the sky, which is thin, transparent, and suffused with an equal heat, does not seem by its nature to have power to whirl about the stars, or to be proper to contain them. The fixed stars, therefore, have their own sphere, separate and free from any conjunction with the sky. Their perpetual courses, with that admirable and incredible regularity of theirs, so plainly declare a divine power and mind to be in them, that he who cannot perceive that they are also endowed with divine power must be incapable of all perception whatever.

In the heavens, therefore, there is nothing fortuitous, unadvised, inconstant, or variable: all there is order, truth, reason, and constancy; and all the things which are destitute of these qualities are counterfeit, deceitful, and erroneous, and have their residence about the earth⁶⁴ beneath the moon, the lowest of all the planets. He, therefore, who believes that this admirable order and almost incredible regularity of the heavenly bodies, by which the preservation and entire safety of all things is secured, is destitute of intelligence, must be considered to be himself wholly destitute of all intellect whatever.

I think, then, I shall not deceive myself in maintaining this dispute upon the principle of Zeno, who went the farthest in his search after truth.

XXII. Zeno, then, defines nature to be “an artificial fire, proceeding in a regular way to generation;” for he thinks that to create and beget are especial properties of art,

⁶¹ The zodiac.

⁶² Though Mars is said to hold his orbit in the zodiac with the rest, and to finish his revolution through the same orbit (that is, the zodiac) with the other two, yet Balbus means in a different line of the zodiac.

⁶³ According to late observations, it never goes but a sign and a half from the sun.

⁶⁴ These, Dr. Davis says, are “aërial fires;” concerning which he refers to the second book of Pliny.

and that whatever may be wrought by the hands of our artificers is much more skilfully performed by nature, that is, by this artificial fire, which is the master of all other arts.

According to this manner of reasoning, every particular nature is artificial, as it operates agreeably to a certain method peculiar to itself; but that universal nature which embraces all things is said by Zeno to be not only artificial, but absolutely the artificer, ever thinking and providing all things useful and proper; and as every particular nature owes its rise and increase to its own proper seed, so universal nature has all her motions voluntary, has affections and desires (by the Greeks called ὁρμῆς) productive of actions agreeable to them, like us, who have sense and understanding to direct us. Such, then, is the intelligence of the universe; for which reason it may be properly termed prudence or providence (in Greek, πρόνοια), since her chiefest care and employment is to provide all things fit for its duration, that it may want nothing, and, above all, that it may be adorned with all perfection of beauty and ornament.

XXIII. Thus far have I spoken concerning the universe, and also of the stars; from whence it is apparent that there is almost an infinite number of Gods, always in action, but without labor or fatigue; for they are not composed of veins, nerves, and bones; their food and drink are not such as cause humors too gross or too subtle; nor are their bodies such as to be subject to the fear of falls or blows, or in danger of diseases from a weariness of limbs. Epicurus, to secure his Gods from such accidents, has made them only outlines of Deities, void of action; but our Gods being of the most beautiful form, and situated in the purest region of the heavens, dispose and rule their course in such a manner that they seem to contribute to the support and preservation of all things.

Besides these, there are many other natures which have with reason been deified by the wisest Grecians, and by our ancestors, in consideration of the benefits derived from them; for they were persuaded that whatever was of great utility to human kind must proceed from divine goodness, and the name of the Deity was applied to that which the Deity produced, as when we call corn Ceres, and wine Bacchus; whence that saying of Terence,⁶⁵

Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus starves.

And any quality, also, in which there was any singular virtue was nominated a Deity, such as Faith and Wisdom, which are placed among the divinities in the Capitol; the last by Æmilius Scaurus, but Faith was consecrated before by Atilius Calatinus. You see the temple of Virtue and that of Honor repaired by M. Marcellus, erected formerly, in the Ligurian war, by Q. Maximus. Need I mention those dedicated to Help, Safety, Concord, Liberty, and Victory, which have been called Deities, because their efficacy has been so great that it could not have proceeded from any but from some divine power? In like manner are the names of Cupid, Voluptas, and of Lubentine Venus consecrated, though they were things vicious and not natural, whatever Velleius may think to the contrary, for they frequently stimulate nature in too violent a manner. Everything, then, from which any great utility proceeded was deified; and, indeed, the names I have just now mentioned are declaratory of the particular virtue of each Deity.

⁶⁵ In the Eunuch of Terence.

XXIV. It has been a general custom likewise, that men who have done important service to the public should be exalted to heaven by fame and universal consent. Thus Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Æsculapius, and Liber became Gods (I mean Liber⁶⁶ the son of Semele, and not him⁶⁷ whom our ancestors consecrated in such state and solemnity with Ceres and Libera; the difference in which may be seen in our Mysteries.⁶⁸ But because the offsprings of our bodies are called “Liberi” (children), therefore the offsprings of Ceres are called Liber and Libera (Libera⁶⁹ is the feminine, and Liber the masculine); thus likewise Romulus, or Quirinus—for they are thought to be the same—became a God.

They are justly esteemed as Deities, since their souls subsist and enjoy eternity, from whence they are perfect and immortal beings.

There is another reason, too, and that founded on natural philosophy, which has greatly contributed to the number of Deities; namely, the custom of representing in human form a crowd of Gods who have supplied the poets with fables, and filled mankind with all sorts of superstition. Zeno has treated of this subject, but it has been discussed more at length by Cleanthes and Chrysippus. All Greece was of opinion that Cœlum was castrated by his son Saturn,⁷⁰ and that Saturn was chained by his son Jupiter. In these impious fables, a physical and not inelegant meaning is contained; for they would denote that the celestial, most exalted, and ethereal nature—that is, the fiery nature, which produces all things by itself—is destitute of that part of the body which is necessary for the act of generation by conjunction with another.

XXV. By Saturn they mean that which comprehends the course and revolution of times and seasons; the Greek name for which Deity implies as much, for he is called Κρόνος, which is the same with Χρόνος, that is, a “space of time.” But he is called Saturn, because he is filled (*saturatur*) with years; and he is usually feigned to have devoured his children, because time, ever insatiable, consumes the rolling years; but to restrain him from immoderate haste, Jupiter has confined him to the course of the stars, which are as chains to him. Jupiter (that is, *juvans pater*) signifies a “helping father,” whom, by changing the cases, we call Jove,⁷¹ *a juvando*. The poets call him “father of Gods and men;”⁷² and our ancestors “the most good, the most great;” and as there is something more glorious in itself, and more agreeable to

⁶⁶ Bacchus.

⁶⁷ The son of Ceres.

⁶⁸ The books of Ceremonies.

⁶⁹ This Libera is taken for Proserpine, who, with her brother Liber, was consecrated by the Romans; all which are parts of nature in prosopopœias. Cicero, therefore, makes Balbus distinguish between the person Liber, or Bacchus, and the Liber which is a part of nature in prosopopœia.

⁷⁰ These allegorical fables are largely related by Hesiod in his Theogony.

Horace says exactly the same thing:

Hâc arte Pollux et vagus Hercules

Enisus arces attigit igneas:

Quos inter Augustus recumbens

Purpureo bibit ore nectar.

Hâc te merentem, Bacche pater, tuæ

Vexere tigres indocili jugum

Collo ferentes: hâc Quirinus

Martis equis Acheronta fugit.—Hor. iii. 3. 9.

⁷¹ Cicero means by *conversis casibus*, varying the cases from the common rule of declension; that is, by departing from the true grammatical rules of speech; for if we would keep to it, we should decline the word *Jupiter*, *Jupiteris* in the second case, etc.

⁷² *Pater divûmque hominumque*.

others, to be good (that is, beneficent) than to be great, the title of “most good” precedes that of “most great.” This, then, is he whom Ennius means in the following passage, before quoted—

Look up to the refulgent heaven above,
Which all men call, unanimously, Jove:

which is more plainly expressed than in this other passage⁷³ of the same poet—

On whose account I’ll curse that flood of light,
Whate’er it is above that shines so bright.

Our augurs also mean the same, when, for the “thundering and lightning heaven,” they say the “thundering and lightning Jove.” Euripides, among many excellent things, has this:

The vast, expanded, boundless sky behold,
See it with soft embrace the earth enfold;
This own the chief of Deities above,
And this acknowledge by the name of Jove.

XXVI. The air, according to the Stoics, which is between the sea and the heaven, is consecrated by the name of Juno, and is called the sister and wife of Jove, because it resembles the sky, and is in close conjunction with it. They have made it feminine, because there is nothing softer. But I believe it is called Juno, *a juvando* (from helping).

To make three separate kingdoms, by fable, there remained yet the water and the earth. The dominion of the sea is given, therefore, to Neptune, a brother, as he is called, of Jove; whose name, Neptunus—as *Portunus*, *a portu*, from a port—is derived *a nando* (from swimming), the first letters being a little changed. The sovereignty and power over the earth is the portion of a God, to whom we, as well as the Greeks, have given a name that denotes riches (in Latin, *Dis*; in Greek, Πλούτων), because all things arise from the earth and return to it. He forced away Proserpine (in Greek called Περσεφόνη), by which the poets mean the “seed of corn,” from whence comes their fiction of Ceres, the mother of Proserpine, seeking for her daughter, who was hidden from her. She is called Ceres, which is the same as Geres—*a gerendis frugibus*⁷⁴—“from bearing fruit,” the first letter of the word being altered after the manner of the Greeks, for by them she is called Δημήτηρ, the same as Γημήτηρ.⁷⁵ Again, he (*qui magna vorteret*) “who brings about mighty changes” is called Mavors; and Minerva is so called because (*minueret*, or *minaretur*) she diminishes or menaces.

XXVII. And as the beginnings and endings of all things are of the greatest importance, therefore they would have their sacrifices to begin with Janus.⁷⁶ His name is derived *ab eundo*, from passing; from whence thorough passages are called *jani*, and the outward doors of common houses are called *januæ*. The name of Vesta is, from the Greeks, the same with their Ἑστία. Her province is over altars and

⁷³ The common reading is, *planiusque alio loco idem*; which, as Dr. Davis observes, is absurd; therefore, in his note, he prefers *planius quam alia loco idem*, from two copies, in which sense I have translated it.

⁷⁴ From the verb *gero*, to bear.

⁷⁵ That is, “mother earth.”

⁷⁶ Janus is said to be the first who erected temples in Italy, and instituted religious rites, and from whom the first month in the Roman calendar is derived.

hearths; and in the name of this Goddess, who is the keeper of all things within, prayers and sacrifices are concluded. The *Dii Penates*, “household Gods,” have some affinity with this power, and are so called either from *penus*, “all kind of human provisions,” or because *penitus insident* (they reside within), from which, by the poets, they are called *penetrales* also. Apollo, a Greek name, is called *Sol*, the sun; and Diana, *Luna*, the moon. The sun (*sol*) is so named either because he is *solus* (alone), so eminent above all the stars; or because he obscures all the stars, and appears alone as soon as he rises. *Luna*, the moon, is so called *a lucendo* (from shining); she bears the name also of Lucina: and as in Greece the women in labor invoke Diana Lucifera, so here they invoke Juno Lucina. She is likewise called Diana *omnivaga*, not *a venando* (from hunting), but because she is reckoned one of the seven stars that seem to wander.⁷⁷ She is called Diana because she makes a kind of day of the night;⁷⁸ and presides over births, because the delivery is effected sometimes in seven, or at most in nine, courses of the moon; which, because they make *mensa spatia* (measured spaces), are called *menses* (months). This occasioned a pleasant observation of Timæus (as he has many). Having said in his history that “the same night in which Alexander was born, the temple of Diana at Ephesus was burned down,” he adds, “It is not in the least to be wondered at, because Diana, being willing to assist at the labor of Olympias,⁷⁹ was absent from home.” But to this Goddess, because *ad res omnes veniret*—“she has an influence upon all things”—we have given the appellation of Venus,⁸⁰ from whom the word *venustas* (beauty) is rather derived than Venus from *venustas*.

XXVIII. Do you not see, therefore, how, from the productions of nature and the useful inventions of men, have arisen fictitious and imaginary Deities, which have been the foundation of false opinions, pernicious errors, and wretched superstitions? For we know how the different forms of the Gods—their ages, apparel, ornaments; their pedigrees, marriages, relations, and everything belonging to them—are adapted to human weakness and represented with our passions; with lust, sorrow, and anger, according to fabulous history: they have had wars and combats, not only, as Homer relates, when they have interested themselves in two different armies, but when they have fought battles in their own defence against the Titans and giants. These stories, of the greatest weakness and levity, are related and believed with the most implicit folly.

But, rejecting these fables with contempt, a Deity is diffused in every part of nature; in earth under the name of Ceres, in the sea under the name of Neptune, in other parts under other names. Yet whatever they are, and whatever characters and dispositions they have, and whatever name custom has given them, we are bound to worship and adore them. The best, the chastest, the most sacred and pious worship of the Gods is to reverence them always with a pure, perfect, and unpolluted mind and voice; for our ancestors, as well as the philosophers, have separated superstition from religion. They who prayed whole days and sacrificed, that their children might survive them (*ut superstites essent*), were called superstitious, which word became afterward more general; but they who diligently perused, and, as we may say, read or

⁷⁷ *Stellæ vagantes*.

⁷⁸ *Noctu quasi diem efficeret*. Ben Jonson says the same thing:

Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright.—*Ode to the Moon*.

⁷⁹ Olympias was the mother of Alexander.

⁸⁰ Venus is here said to be one of the names of Diana, because *ad res omnes veniret*; but she is not supposed to be the same as the mother of Cupid.

practised over again, all the duties relating to the worship of the Gods, were called *religiosi*—religious, from *relegendo*—“reading over again, or practising;” as *elegantes*, elegant, *ex eligendo*, “from choosing, making a good choice;” *diligentes*, diligent, *ex diligendo*, “from attending on what we love;” *intelligentes*, intelligent, from understanding—for the signification is derived in the same manner. Thus are the words superstitious and religious understood; the one being a term of reproach, the other of commendation. I think I have now sufficiently demonstrated that there are Gods, and what they are.

XXIX. I am now to show that the world is governed by the providence of the Gods. This is an important point, which you Academics endeavor to confound; and, indeed, the whole contest is with you, Cotta; for your sect, Velleius, know very little of what is said on different subjects by other schools. You read and have a taste only for your own books, and condemn all others without examination. For instance, when you mentioned yesterday⁸¹ that prophetic old dame Πρόνοια, Providence, invented by the Stoics, you were led into that error by imagining that Providence was made by them to be a particular Deity that governs the whole universe, whereas it is only spoken in a short manner; as when it is said “The commonwealth of Athens is governed by the council,” it is meant “of the Areopagus;”⁸² so when we say “The world is governed by providence,” we mean “by the providence of the Gods.” To express ourselves, therefore, more fully and clearly, we say, “The world is governed by the providence of the Gods.” Be not, therefore, lavish of your railleries, of which your sect has little to spare: if I may advise you, do not attempt it. It does not become you, it is not your talent, nor is it in your power. This is not applied to you in particular who have the education and politeness of a Roman, but to all your sect in general, and especially to your leader⁸³—a man unpolished, illiterate, insulting, without wit, without reputation, without elegance.

XXX. I assert, then, that the universe, with all its parts, was originally constituted, and has, without any cessation, been ever governed by the providence of the Gods. This argument we Stoics commonly divide into three parts; the first of which is, that the existence of the Gods being once known, it must follow that the world is governed by their wisdom; the second, that as everything is under the direction of an intelligent nature, which has produced that beautiful order in the world, it is evident that it is formed from animating principles; the third is deduced from those glorious works which we behold in the heavens and the earth.

First, then, we must either deny the existence of the Gods (as Democritus and Epicurus by their doctrine of images in some sort do), or, if we acknowledge that there are Gods, we must believe they are employed, and that, too, in something excellent. Now, nothing is so excellent as the administration of the universe. The universe, therefore, is governed by the wisdom of the Gods. Otherwise, we must imagine that there is some cause superior to the Deity, whether it be a nature inanimate, or a necessity agitated by a mighty force, that produces those beautiful works which we behold. The nature of the Gods would then be neither supreme nor excellent, if you subject it to that necessity or to that nature, by which you would make the heaven, the earth, and the seas to be governed. But there is nothing

⁸¹ Here is a mistake, as Fulvius Ursinus observes; for the discourse seems to be continued in one day, as appears from the beginning of this book. This may be an inadvertency of Cicero.

⁸² The senate of Athens was so called from the words Ἀρειος Πάγος, the Village, some say the Hill, of Mars.

⁸³ Epicurus.

superior to the Deity; the world, therefore, must be governed by him: consequently, the Deity is under no obedience or subjection to nature, but does himself rule over all nature. In effect, if we allow the Gods have understanding, we allow also their providence, which regards the most important things; for, can they be ignorant of those important things, and how they are to be conducted and preserved, or do they want power to sustain and direct them? Ignorance is inconsistent with the nature of the Gods, and imbecility is repugnant to their majesty. From whence it follows, as we assert, that the world is governed by the providence of the Gods.

XXXI. But supposing, which is incontestable, that there are Gods, they must be animated, and not only animated, but endowed with reason—united, as we may say, in a civil agreement and society, and governing together one universe, as a republic or city. Thus the same reason, the same verity, the same law, which ordains good and prohibits evil, exists in the Gods as it does in men. From them, consequently, we have prudence and understanding, for which reason our ancestors erected temples to the Mind, Faith, Virtue, and Concord. Shall we not then allow the Gods to have these perfections, since we worship the sacred and august images of them? But if understanding, faith, virtue, and concord reside in human kind, how could they come on earth, unless from heaven? And if we are possessed of wisdom, reason, and prudence, the Gods must have the same qualities in a greater degree; and not only have them, but employ them in the best and greatest works. The universe is the best and greatest work; therefore it must be governed by the wisdom and providence of the Gods.

Lastly, as we have sufficiently shown that those glorious and luminous bodies which we behold are Deities—I mean the sun, the moon, the fixed and wandering stars, the firmament, and the world itself, and those other things also which have any singular virtue, and are of any great utility to human kind—it follows that all things are governed by providence and a divine mind. But enough has been said on the first part.

XXXII. It is now incumbent on me to prove that all things are subjected to nature, and most beautifully directed by her. But, first of all, it is proper to explain precisely what that nature is, in order to come to the more easy understanding of what I would demonstrate. Some think that nature is a certain irrational power exciting in bodies the necessary motions. Others, that it is an intelligent power, acting by order and method, designing some end in every cause, and always aiming at that end, whose works express such skill as no art, no hand, can imitate; for, they say, such is the virtue of its seed, that, however small it is, if it falls into a place proper for its reception, and meets with matter conducive to its nourishment and increase, it forms and produces everything in its respective kind; either vegetables, which receive their nourishment from their roots; or animals, endowed with motion, sense, appetite, and abilities to beget their likeness.

Some apply the word nature to everything; as Epicurus does, who acknowledges no cause, but atoms, a vacuum, and their accidents. But when we⁸⁴ say that nature forms and governs the world, we do not apply it to a clod of earth, or piece of stone, or anything of that sort, whose parts have not the necessary cohesion,⁸⁵ but to a tree, in which there is not the appearance of chance, but of order and a resemblance of art.

⁸⁴ The Stoics.

⁸⁵ By *nulla cohærendi natura*—if it is the right, as it is the common reading—Cicero must mean the same as by *nulla crescendi natura*, or *coalescendi*, either of which Lambinus proposes; for, as the

XXXIII. But if the art of nature gives life and increase to vegetables, without doubt it supports the earth itself; for, being impregnated with seeds, she produces every kind of vegetable, and embracing their roots, she nourishes and increases them; while, in her turn, she receives her nourishment from the other elements, and by her exhalations gives proper sustenance to the air, the sky, and all the superior bodies. If nature gives vigor and support to the earth, by the same reason she has an influence over the rest of the world; for as the earth gives nourishment to vegetables, so the air is the preservation of animals. The air sees with us, hears with us, and utters sounds with us; without it, there would be no seeing, hearing, or sounding. It even moves with us; for wherever we go, whatever motion we make, it seems to retire and give place to us.

That which inclines to the centre, that which rises from it to the surface, and that which rolls about the centre, constitute the universal world, and make one entire nature; and as there are four sorts of bodies, the continuance of nature is caused by their reciprocal changes; for the water arises from the earth, the air from the water, and the fire from the air; and, reversing this order, the air arises from fire, the water from the air, and from the water the earth, the lowest of the four elements, of which all beings are formed. Thus by their continual motions backward and forward, upward and downward, the conjunction of the several parts of the universe is preserved; a union which, in the beauty we now behold it, must be eternal, or at least of a very long duration, and almost for an infinite space of time; and, whichever it is, the universe must of consequence be governed by nature. For what art of navigating fleets, or of marshalling an army, and—to instance the produce of nature—what vine, what tree, what animated form and conformation of their members, give us so great an indication of skill as appears in the universe? Therefore we must either deny that there is the least trace of an intelligent nature, or acknowledge that the world is governed by it. But since the universe contains all particular beings, as well as their seeds, can we say that it is not itself governed by nature? That would be the same as saying that the teeth and the beard of man are the work of nature, but that the man himself is not. Thus the effect would be understood to be greater than the cause.

XXXIV. Now, the universe sows, as I may say, plants, produces, raises, nourishes, and preserves what nature administers, as members and parts of itself. If nature, therefore, governs them, she must also govern the universe. And, lastly, in nature's administration there is nothing faulty. She produced the best possible effect out of those elements which existed. Let any one show how it could have been better. But that can never be; and whoever attempts to mend it will either make it worse, or aim at impossibilities.

But if all the parts of the universe are so constituted that nothing could be better for use or beauty, let us consider whether this is the effect of chance, or whether, in such a state they could possibly cohere, but by the direction of wisdom and divine providence. Nature, therefore, cannot be void of reason, if art can bring nothing to perfection without it, and if the works of nature exceed those of art. How is it consistent with common-sense that when you view an image or a picture, you imagine it is wrought by art; when you behold afar off a ship under sail, you judge it is steered by reason and art; when you see a dial or water-clock,⁸⁶ you believe the

same learned critic well observes, is there not a cohesion of parts in a clod, or in a piece of stone? Our learned Walker proposes *sola cohærendi natura*, which mends the sense very much; and I wish he had the authority of any copy for it.

⁸⁶ Nasica Scipio, the censor, is said to have been the first who made a water-clock in Rome.

hours are shown by art, and not by chance; and yet that you should imagine that the universe, which contains all arts and the artificers, can be void of reason and understanding?

But if that sphere which was lately made by our friend Posidonius, the regular revolutions of which show the course of the sun, moon, and five wandering stars, as it is every day and night performed, were carried into Scythia or Britain, who, in those barbarous countries, would doubt that that sphere had been made so perfect by the exertion of reason?

XXXV. Yet these people⁸⁷ doubt whether the universe, from whence all things arise and are made, is not the effect of chance, or some necessity, rather than the work of reason and a divine mind. According to them, Archimedes shows more knowledge in representing the motions of the celestial globe than nature does in causing them, though the copy is so infinitely beneath the original. The shepherd in Attius,⁸⁸ who had never seen a ship, when he perceived from a mountain afar off the divine vessel of the Argonauts, surprised and frightened at this new object, expressed himself in this manner:

What horrid bulk is that before my eyes,
Which o'er the deep with noise and vigor flies?
It turns the whirlpools up, its force so strong,
And drives the billows as it rolls along.
The ocean's violence it fiercely braves;
Runs furious on, and throws about the waves.
Swiftly impetuous in its course, and loud,
Like the dire bursting of a show'ry cloud;
Or, like a rock, forced by the winds and rain,
Now whirl'd aloft, then plunged into the main.
But hold! perhaps the Earth and Neptune jar,
And fiercely wage an elemental war;
Or Triton with his trident has o'erthrown
His den, and loosen'd from the roots the stone;
The rocky fragment, from the bottom torn,
Is lifted up, and on the surface borne.

At first he is in suspense at the sight of this unknown object; but on seeing the young mariners, and hearing their singing, he says,

Like sportive dolphins, with their snouts they roar;⁸⁹

and afterward goes on,

Loud in my ears methinks their voices ring,
As if I heard the God Sylvanus sing.

As at first view the shepherd thinks he sees something inanimate and insensible, but afterward, judging by more trustworthy indications, he begins to figure to himself what it is; so philosophers, if they are surprised at first at the sight of the universe,

⁸⁷ The Epicureans.

⁸⁸ An old Latin poet, commended by Quintilian for the gravity of his sense and his loftiness of style.

⁸⁹ The shepherd is here supposed to take the stem or beak of the ship for the mouth, from which the roaring voices of the sailors came. *Rostrum* is here a lucky word to put in the mouth of one who never saw a ship before, as it is used for the beak of a bird, the snout of a beast or fish, and for the stem of a ship.

ought, when they have considered the regular, uniform, and immutable motions of it, to conceive that there is some Being that is not only an inhabitant of this celestial and divine mansion, but a ruler and a governor, as architect of this mighty fabric.

XXXVI. Now, in my opinion, they⁹⁰ do not seem to have even the least suspicion that the heavens and earth afford anything marvellous. For, in the first place, the earth is situated in the middle part of the universe, and is surrounded on all sides by the air, which we breathe, and which is called “aer,”⁹¹ which, indeed, is a Greek word; but by constant use it is well understood by our countrymen, for, indeed, it is employed as a Latin word. The air is encompassed by the boundless ether (sky), which consists of the fires above. This word we borrow also, for we use *æther* in Latin as well as *aer*; though Pacuvius thus expresses it,

—This, of which I speak,
In Latin’s *cælum*, *æther* call’d in Greek.

As though he were not a Greek into whose mouth he puts this sentence; but he is speaking in Latin, though we listen as if he were speaking Greek; for, as he says elsewhere,

His speech discovers him a Grecian born.

But to return to more important matters. In the sky innumerable fiery stars exist, of which the sun is the chief, enlightening all with his refulgent splendor, and being by many degrees larger than the whole earth; and this multitude of vast fires are so far from hurting the earth, and things terrestrial, that they are of benefit to them; whereas, if they were moved from their stations, we should inevitably be burned through the want of a proper moderation and temperature of heat.

XXXVII. Is it possible for any man to behold these things, and yet imagine that certain solid and individual bodies move by their natural force and gravitation, and that a world so beautifully adorned was made by their fortuitous concurrence? He who believes this may as well believe that if a great quantity of the one-and-twenty letters, composed either of gold or any other matter, were thrown upon the ground, they would fall into such order as legibly to form the Annals of Ennius. I doubt whether fortune could make a single verse of them. How, therefore, can these people assert that the world was made by the fortuitous concurrence of atoms, which have no color, no quality—which the Greeks call *ποιότης*, no sense? or that there are innumerable worlds, some rising and some perishing, in every moment of time? But if a concurrence of atoms can make a world, why not a porch, a temple, a house, a city, which are works of less labor and difficulty?

Certainly those men talk so idly and inconsiderately concerning this lower world that they appear to me never to have contemplated the wonderful magnificence of the heavens; which is the next topic for our consideration.

Well, then, did Aristotle⁹² observe: “If there were men whose habitations had been always underground, in great and commodious houses, adorned with statues and pictures, furnished with everything which they who are reputed happy abound with; and if, without stirring from thence, they should be informed of a certain divine power and majesty, and, after some time, the earth should open, and they should quit their dark abode to come to us, where they should immediately behold the earth,

⁹⁰ The Epicureans.

⁹¹ Greek, *ἀήρ*; Latin, *aer*.

⁹² The treatise of Aristotle, from whence this is taken, is lost.

the seas, the heavens; should consider the vast extent of the clouds and force of the winds; should see the sun, and observe his grandeur and beauty, and also his generative power, inasmuch as day is occasioned by the diffusion of his light through the sky; and when night has obscured the earth, they should contemplate the heavens bespangled and adorned with stars, the surprising variety of the moon in her increase and wane, the rising and setting of all the stars, and the inviolable regularity of their courses; when," says he, "they should see these things, they would undoubtedly conclude that there are Gods, and that these are their mighty works."

XXXVIII. Thus far Aristotle. Let us imagine, also, as great darkness as was formerly occasioned by the irruption of the fires of Mount Ætna, which are said to have obscured the adjacent countries for two days to such a degree that no man could recognize his fellow; but on the third, when the sun appeared, they seemed to be risen from the dead. Now, if we should be suddenly brought from a state of eternal darkness to see the light, how beautiful would the heavens seem! But our minds have become used to it from the daily practice and habituation of our eyes, nor do we take the trouble to search into the principles of what is always in view; as if the novelty, rather than the importance, of things ought to excite us to investigate their causes.

Is he worthy to be called a man who attributes to chance, not to an intelligent cause, the constant motion of the heavens, the regular courses of the stars, the agreeable proportion and connection of all things, conducted with so much reason that our intellect itself is unable to estimate it rightly? When we see machines move artificially, as a sphere, a clock, or the like, do we doubt whether they are the productions of reason? And when we behold the heavens moving with a prodigious celerity, and causing an annual succession of the different seasons of the year, which vivify and preserve all things, can we doubt that this world is directed, I will not say only by reason, but by reason most excellent and divine? For without troubling ourselves with too refined a subtlety of discussion, we may use our eyes to contemplate the beauty of those things which we assert have been arranged by divine providence.

XXXIX. First, let us examine the earth, whose situation is in the middle of the universe,⁹³ solid, round, and conglobular by its natural tendency; clothed with flowers, herbs, trees, and fruits; the whole in multitudes incredible, and with a variety suitable to every taste: let us consider the ever-cool and running springs, the clear waters of the rivers, the verdure of their banks, the hollow depths of caves, the cragginess of rocks, the heights of impending mountains, and the boundless extent of plains, the hidden veins of gold and silver, and the infinite quarries of marble.

What and how various are the kinds of animals, tame or wild? The flights and notes of birds? How do the beasts live in the fields and in the forests? What shall I say of men, who, being appointed, as we may say, to cultivate the earth, do not suffer its fertility to be choked with weeds, nor the ferocity of beasts to make it desolate; who, by the houses and cities which they build, adorn the fields, the isles, and the shores? If we could view these objects with the naked eye, as we can by the contemplation of the mind, nobody, at such a sight, would doubt there was a divine intelligence.

But how beautiful is the sea! How pleasant to see the extent of it! What a multitude and variety of islands! How delightful are the coasts! What numbers and what

⁹³ To the universe the Stoics certainly annexed the idea of a limited space, otherwise they could not have talked of a middle; for there can be no middle but of a limited space: infinite space can have no middle, there being infinite extension from every part.

diversity of inhabitants does it contain; some within the bosom of it, some floating on the surface, and others by their shells cleaving to the rocks! While the sea itself, approaching to the land, sports so closely to its shores that those two elements appear to be but one.

Next above the sea is the air, diversified by day and night: when rarefied, it possesses the higher region; when condensed, it turns into clouds, and with the waters which it gathers enriches the earth by the rain. Its agitation produces the winds. It causes heat and cold according to the different seasons. It sustains birds in their flight; and, being inhaled, nourishes and preserves all animated beings.

XL. Add to these, which alone remaineth to be mentioned, the firmament of heaven, a region the farthest from our abodes, which surrounds and contains all things. It is likewise called ether, or sky, the extreme bounds and limits of the universe, in which the stars perform their appointed courses in a most wonderful manner; among which, the sun, whose magnitude far surpasses the earth, makes his revolution round it, and by his rising and setting causes day and night; sometimes coming near towards the earth, and sometimes going from it, he every year makes two contrary reversions⁹⁴ from the extreme point of its course. In his retreat the earth seems locked up in sadness; in his return it appears exhilarated with the heavens. The moon, which, as mathematicians demonstrate, is bigger than half the earth, makes her revolutions through the same spaces⁹⁵ as the sun; but at one time approaching, and at another receding from, the sun, she diffuses the light which she has borrowed from him over the whole earth, and has herself also many various changes in her appearance. When she is found under the sun, and opposite to it, the brightness of her rays is lost; but when the earth directly interposes between the moon and sun, the moon is totally eclipsed. The other wandering stars have their courses round the earth in the same spaces,⁹⁶ and rise and set in the same manner; their motions are sometimes quick, sometimes slow, and often they stand still. There is nothing more wonderful, nothing more beautiful. There is a vast number of fixed stars, distinguished by the names of certain figures, to which we find they have some resemblance.

XLI. I will here, says Balbus, looking at me, make use of the verses which, when you were young, you translated from Aratus,⁹⁷ and which, because they are in Latin, gave me so much delight that I have many of them still in my memory. As then, we daily see, without any change or variation,

—the rest⁹⁸

Swiftly pursue the course to which they're bound;
And with the heavens the days and nights go round;

⁹⁴ These two contrary reversions are from the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. They are the extreme bounds of the sun's course. The reader must observe that the astronomical parts of this book are introduced by the Stoic as proofs of design and reason in the universe; and, notwithstanding the errors in his planetary system, his intent is well answered, because all he means is that the regular motions of the heavenly bodies, and their dependencies, are demonstrations of a divine mind. The inference proposed to be drawn from his astronomical observations is as just as if his system was in every part unexceptionably right: the same may be said of his anatomical observations.

⁹⁵ In the zodiac.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ These verses of Cicero are a translation from a Greek poem of Aratus, called the *Phænomena*.

⁹⁸ The fixed stars.

the contemplation of which, to a mind desirous of observing the constancy of nature, is inexhaustible.

The extreme top of either point is call'd
The pole.⁹⁹

About this the two Ἀρκτοι are turned, which never set;

Of these, the Greeks one Cynosura call,
The other Helice.¹⁰⁰

The brightest stars,¹⁰¹ indeed, of Helice are discernible all night,
Which are by us Septentriones call'd.

Cynosura moves about the same pole, with a like number of stars, and ranged in the same order:

This¹⁰² the Phœnicians choose to make their guide
When on the ocean in the night they ride.
Adorned with stars of more refulgent light,
The other¹⁰³ shines, and first appears at night.
Though this is small, sailors its use have found;
More inward is its course, and short its round.

XLII. The aspect of those stars is the more admirable, because,

The Dragon grim between them bends his way,
As through the winding banks the currents stray,
And up and down in sinuous bending rolls.¹⁰⁴

His whole form is excellent; but the shape of his head and the ardor of his eyes are most remarkable.

Various the stars which deck his glittering head;
His temples are with double glory spread;
From his fierce eyes two fervid lights afar
Flash, and his chin shines with one radiant star;
Bow'd is his head; and his round neck he bends,
And to the tail of Helice¹⁰⁵ extends.

The rest of the Dragon's body we see¹⁰⁶ at every hour in the night.

⁹⁹ The arctic and antarctic poles.

¹⁰⁰ The two Arctoi are northern constellations. Cynosura is what we call the Lesser Bear; Helice, the Greater Bear; in Latin, *Ursa Minor* and *Ursa Major*.

¹⁰¹ These stars in the Greater Bear are vulgarly called the "Seven Stars," or the "Northern Wain;" by the Latins, "Septentriones."

¹⁰² The Lesser Bear.

¹⁰³ The Greater Bear.

¹⁰⁴ Exactly agreeable to this and the following description of the Dragon is the same northern constellation described in the map by Flamsteed in his *Atlas Cœlestis*; and all the figures here described by Aratus nearly agree with the maps of the same constellations in the *Atlas Cœlestis*, though they are not all placed precisely alike.

¹⁰⁵ The tail of the Greater Bear.

¹⁰⁶ That is, in Macedon, where Aratus lived.

Here¹⁰⁷ suddenly the head a little hides
 Itself, where all its parts, which are in sight,
 And those unseen in the same place unite.

Near to this head

Is placed the figure of a man that moves
 Weary and sad,

which the Greeks

Engonasis do call, because he's borne¹⁰⁸
 About with bended knee. Near him is placed
 The crown with a refulgent lustre graced.

This indeed is at his back; but Anguitenens (the Snake-holder) is near his head:¹⁰⁹

The Greeks him Ophiuchus call, renown'd
 The name. He strongly grasps the serpent round
 With both his hands; himself the serpent folds
 Beneath his breast, and round his middle holds;
 Yet gravely he, bright shining in the skies,
 Moves on, and treads on Nepa's¹¹⁰ breast and eyes.

The Septentriones¹¹¹ are followed by—

Arctophylax,¹¹² that's said to be the same
 Which we Boötes call, who has the name,
 Because he drives the Greater Bear along
 Yoked to a wain.

Besides, in Boötes,

A star of glittering rays about his waist,
 Arcturus called, a name renown'd, is placed.¹¹³

Beneath which is

The Virgin of illustrious form, whose hand
 Holds a bright spike.

¹⁰⁷ The true interpretation of this passage is as follows: Here in Macedon, says Aratus, the head of the Dragon does not entirely immerse itself in the ocean, but only touches the superficies of it. By *ortus* and *obitus* I doubt not but Cicero meant, agreeable to Aratus, those parts which arise to view, and those which are removed from sight.

¹⁰⁸ These are two northern constellations. Engonasis, in some catalogues called Hercules, because he is figured kneeling ἐν γόνασιν (on his knees). Ἐνγόνασιν καλέουσ', as Aratus says, they call Engonasis.

¹⁰⁹ The crown is placed under the feet of Hercules in the Atlas Cœlestis; but Ophiuchus (Ὀφιοῦχος), the Snake-holder, is placed in the map by Flamsteed as described here by Aratus; and their heads almost meet.

¹¹⁰ The Scorpion. Ophiuchus, though a northern constellation, is not far from that part of the zodiac where the Scorpion is, which is one of the six southern signs.

¹¹¹ The Wain of seven stars.

¹¹² The Wain-driver. This northern constellation is, in our present maps, figured with a club in his right hand behind the Greater Bear.

¹¹³ In some modern maps Arcturus, a star of the first magnitude, is placed in the belt that is round the waist of Boötes. Cicero says *subter præcordia*, which is about the waist; and Aratus says ὑπὸ ζώνῃ, under the belt.

XLIII. And truly these signs are so regularly disposed that a divine wisdom evidently appears in them:

Beneath the Bear's¹¹⁴ head have the Twins their seat,
Under his chest the Crab, beneath his feet
The mighty Lion darts a trembling flame.¹¹⁵

The Charioteer

On the left side of Gemini we see,¹¹⁶
And at his head behold fierce Helice;
On his left shoulder the bright Goat appears.

But to proceed—

This is indeed a great and glorious star,
On th' other side the Kids, inferior far,
Yield but a slender light to mortal eyes.

Under his feet

The horned bull,¹¹⁷ with sturdy limbs, is placed:

his head is spangled with a number of stars;

These by the Greeks are called the Hyades,

from raining; for ὕειν is to rain: therefore they are injudiciously called *Suculæ* by our people, as if they had their name from ὕς, a sow, and not from ὕω.

Behind the Lesser Bear, Cepheus¹¹⁸ follows with extended hands,

For close behind the Lesser Bear he comes.

Before him goes

Cassiopea¹¹⁹ with a faintish light;
But near her moves (fair and illustrious sight!)
Andromeda,¹²⁰ who, with an eager pace,
Seems to avoid her parent's mournful face.¹²¹
With glittering mane the Horse¹²² now seems to tread,
So near he comes, on her refulgent head;
With a fair star, that close to him appears,

¹¹⁴ *Sub caput Arcti*, under the head of the Greater Bear.

¹¹⁵ The Crab is, by the ancients and moderns, placed in the zodiac, as here, between the Twins and the Lion; and they are all three northern signs.

¹¹⁶ The Twins are placed in the zodiac with the side of one to the northern hemisphere, and the side of the other to the southern hemisphere. Auriga, the Charioteer, is placed in the northern hemisphere near the zodiac, by the Twins; and at the head of the Charioteer is Helice, the Greater Bear, placed; and the Goat is a bright star of the first magnitude placed on the left shoulder of this northern constellation, and called *Capra*, the Goat. *Hædi*, the Kids, are two more stars of the same constellation.

¹¹⁷ A constellation; one of the northern signs in the zodiac, in which the Hyades are placed.

¹¹⁸ One of the feet of Cepheus, a northern constellation, is under the tail of the Lesser Bear.

¹¹⁹ Grotius, and after him Dr. Davis, and other learned men, read *Cassiepea*, after the Greek Κασσιόπεια, and reject the common reading, *Cassiopea*.

¹²⁰ These northern constellations here mentioned have been always placed together as one family with Cepheus and Perseus, as they are in our modern maps.

¹²¹ This alludes to the fable of Perseus and Andromeda.

¹²² Pegasus, who is one of Perseus and Andromeda's family.

A double form¹²³ and but one light he wears;
 By which he seems ambitious in the sky
 An everlasting knot of stars to tie.
 Near him the Ram, with wreathed horns, is placed;
 by whom

The Fishes¹²⁴ are; of which one seems to haste
 Somewhat before the other, to the blast
 Of the north wind exposed.

XLIV. Perseus is described as placed at the feet of Andromeda:

And him the sharp blasts of the north wind beat.
 Near his left knee, but dim their light, their seat
 The small Pleiades¹²⁵ maintain. We find,
 Not far from them, the Lyre¹²⁶ but slightly join'd.
 Next is the winged Bird,¹²⁷ that seems to fly
 Beneath the spacious covering of the sky.

Near the head of the Horse¹²⁸ lies the right hand of Aquarius, then all Aquarius
 himself.¹²⁹

Then Capricorn, with half the form of beast,
 Breathes chill and piercing colds from his strong breast,
 And in a spacious circle takes his round;
 When him, while in the winter solstice bound,
 The sun has visited with constant light,
 He turns his course, and shorter makes the night.¹³⁰

Not far from hence is seen

The Scorpion¹³¹ rising lofty from below;
 By him the Archer,¹³² with his bended bow;
 Near him the Bird, with gaudy feathers spread;
 And the fierce Eagle¹³³ hovers o'er his head.

Next comes the Dolphin;¹³⁴

¹²³ That is, with wings.

¹²⁴ *Aries*, the Ram, is the first northern sign in the zodiac; *Pisces*, the Fishes, the last southern sign; therefore they must be near one another, as they are in a circle or belt. In Flamsteed's *Atlas Cœlestis* one of the Fishes is near the head of the Ram, and the other near the Urn of Aquarius.

¹²⁵ These are called *Virgiliæ* by Cicero; by Aratus, the Pleiades, Πληϊάδες; and they are placed at the neck of the Bull; and one of Perseus's feet touches the Bull in the *Atlas Cœlestis*.

¹²⁶ This northern constellation is called *Fides* by Cicero; but it must be the same with *Lyra*; because *Lyra* is placed in our maps as *Fides* is here.

¹²⁷ This is called *Ales Avis* by Cicero; and I doubt not but the northern constellation *Cygnus* is here to be understood, for the description and place of the Swan in the *Atlas Cœlestis* are the same which *Ales Avis* has here.

¹²⁸ *Pegasus*.

¹²⁹ The Water-bearer, one of the six southern signs in the zodiac: he is described in our maps pouring water out of an urn, and leaning with one hand on the tail of Capricorn, another southern sign.

¹³⁰ When the sun is in Capricorn, the days are at the shortest; and when in Cancer, at the longest.

¹³¹ One of the six southern signs.

¹³² *Sagittarius*, another southern sign.

¹³³ A northern constellation.

¹³⁴ A northern constellation.

Then bright Orion,¹³⁵ who obliquely moves;
 he is followed by
 The fervent Dog,¹³⁶ bright with refulgent stars:
 next the Hare follows¹³⁷

Unwearied in his course. At the Dog's tail
 Argo¹³⁸ moves on, and moving seems to sail;
 O'er her the Ram and Fishes have their place;¹³⁹
 The illustrious vessel touches, in her pace,
 The river's banks;¹⁴⁰

which you may see winding and extending itself to a great length.

The Fetters¹⁴¹ at the Fishes' tails are hung.
 By Nepa's¹⁴² head behold the Altar stand,¹⁴³
 Which by the breath of southern winds is fann'd;
 near which the Centaur¹⁴⁴

Hastens his mingled parts to join beneath
 The Serpent,¹⁴⁵ there extending his right hand,
 To where you see the monstrous Scorpion stand,
 Which he at the bright Altar fiercely slays.
 Here on her lower parts see Hydra¹⁴⁶ raise
 Herself;

whose bulk is very far extended.

Amid the winding of her body's placed
 The shining Goblet;¹⁴⁷ and the glossy Crow¹⁴⁸
 Plunges his beak into her parts below.
 Antecanis beneath the Twins is seen,
 Call'd Procyon by the Greeks.¹⁴⁹

Can any one in his senses imagine that this disposition of the stars, and this heaven so beautifully adorned, could ever have been formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms? Or what other nature, being destitute of intellect and reason, could possibly

¹³⁵ A southern constellation.

¹³⁶ This is Canis Major, a southern constellation. Orion and the Dog are named together by Hesiod, who flourished many hundred years before Cicero or Aratus.

¹³⁷ A southern constellation, placed as here in the Atlas Cœlestis.

¹³⁸ A southern constellation, so called from the ship Argo, in which Jason and the rest of the Argonauts sailed on their expedition to Colchos.

¹³⁹ The Ram is the first of the northern signs in the zodiac; and the last southern sign is the Fishes; which two signs, meeting in the zodiac, cover the constellation called Argo.

¹⁴⁰ The river Eridanus, a southern constellation.

¹⁴¹ A southern constellation.

¹⁴² This is called the Scorpion in the original of Aratus.

¹⁴³ A southern constellation.

¹⁴⁴ A southern constellation.

¹⁴⁵ The Serpent is not mentioned in Cicero's translation; but it is in the original of Aratus.

¹⁴⁶ A southern constellation.

¹⁴⁷ The Goblet, or Cup, a southern constellation.

¹⁴⁸ A southern constellation.

¹⁴⁹ Antecanis, a southern constellation, is the Little Dog, and called *Antecanis* in Latin, and Προκυων in Greek, because he rises before the other Dog.

have produced these effects, which not only required reason to bring them about, but the very character of which could not be understood and appreciated without the most strenuous exertions of well-directed reason?

XLV. But our admiration is not limited to the objects here described. What is most wonderful is that the world is so durable, and so perfectly made for lasting that it is not to be impaired by time; for all its parts tend equally to the centre, and are bound together by a sort of chain, which surrounds the elements. This chain is nature, which being diffused through the universe, and performing all things with judgment and reason, attracts the extremities to the centre.

If, then, the world is round, and if on that account all its parts, being of equal dimensions and relative proportions, mutually support and are supported by one another, it must follow that as all the parts incline to the centre (for that is the lowest place of a globe) there is nothing whatever which can put a stop to that propensity in the case of such great weights. For the same reason, though the sea is higher than the earth, yet because it has the like tendency, it is collected everywhere, equally concentrates, and never overflows, and is never wasted.

The air, which is contiguous, ascends by its lightness, but diffuses itself through the whole; therefore it is by nature joined and united to the sea, and at the same time borne by the same power towards the heaven, by the thinness and heat of which it is so tempered as to be made proper to supply life and wholesome air for the support of animated beings. This is encompassed by the highest region of the heavens, which is called the sky, which is joined to the extremity of the air, but retains its own heat pure and unmixed.

XLVI. The stars have their revolutions in the sky, and are continued by the tendency of all parts towards the centre. Their duration is perpetuated by their form and figure, for they are round; which form, as I think has been before observed, is the least liable to injury; and as they are composed of fire, they are fed by the vapors which are exhaled by the sun from the earth, the sea, and other waters; but when these vapors have nourished and refreshed the stars, and the whole sky, they are sent back to be exhaled again; so that very little is lost or consumed by the fire of the stars and the flame of the sky. Hence we Stoics conclude—which Panætius¹⁵⁰ is said to have doubted of—that the whole world at last would be consumed by a general conflagration, when, all moisture being exhausted, neither the earth could have any nourishment, nor the air return again, since water, of which it is formed, would then be all consumed; so that only fire would subsist; and from this fire, which is an animating power and a Deity, a new world would arise and be re-established in the same beauty.

I should be sorry to appear to you to dwell too long upon this subject of the stars, and more especially upon that of the planets, whose motions, though different, make a very just agreement. Saturn, the highest, chills; Mars, placed in the middle, burns; while Jupiter, interposing, moderates their excess, both of light and heat. The two planets beneath Mars¹⁵¹ obey the sun. The sun himself fills the whole universe with his own genial light; and the moon, illuminated by him, influences conception, birth, and maturity. And who is there who is not moved by this union of things, and by this

¹⁵⁰ Pansætius, a Stoic philosopher.

¹⁵¹ Mercury and Venus.

concurrence of nature agreeing together, as it were, for the safety of the world? And yet I feel sure that none of these reflections have ever been made by these men.

XLVII. Let us proceed from celestial to terrestrial things. What is there in them which does not prove the principle of an intelligent nature? First, as to vegetables; they have roots to sustain their stems, and to draw from the earth a nourishing moisture to support the vital principle which those roots contain. They are clothed with a rind or bark, to secure them more thoroughly from heat and cold. The vines we see take hold on props with their tendrils, as if with hands, and raise themselves as if they were animated; it is even said that they shun cabbages and coleworts, as noxious and pestilential to them, and, if planted by them, will not touch any part.

But what a vast variety is there of animals! and how wonderfully is every kind adapted to preserve itself! Some are covered with hides, some clothed with fleeces, and some guarded with bristles; some are sheltered with feathers, some with scales; some are armed with horns, and some are furnished with wings to escape from danger. Nature hath also liberally and plentifully provided for all animals their proper food. I could expatiate on the judicious and curious formation and disposition of their bodies for the reception and digestion of it, for all their interior parts are so framed and disposed that there is nothing superfluous, nothing that is not necessary for the preservation of life. Besides, nature has also given these beasts appetite and sense; in order that by the one they may be excited to procure sufficient sustenance, and by the other they may distinguish what is noxious from what is salutary. Some animals seek their food walking, some creeping, some flying, and some swimming; some take it with their mouth and teeth; some seize it with their claws, and some with their beaks; some suck, some graze, some bolt it whole, and some chew it. Some are so low that they can with ease take such food as is to be found on the ground; but the taller, as geese, swans, cranes, and camels, are assisted by a length of neck. To the elephant is given a hand,¹⁵² without which, from his unwieldiness of body, he would scarce have any means of attaining food.

XLVIII. But to those beasts which live by preying on others, nature has given either strength or swiftness. On some animals she has even bestowed artifice and cunning; as on spiders, some of which weave a sort of net to entrap and destroy whatever falls into it, others sit on the watch unobserved to fall on their prey and devour it. The naker—by the Greeks called *Pinna*—has a kind of confederacy with the prawn for procuring food. It has two large shells open, into which when the little fishes swim, the naker, having notice given by the bite of the prawn, closes them immediately. Thus, these little animals, though of different kinds, seek their food in common; in which it is matter of wonder whether they associate by any agreement, or are naturally joined together from their beginning.

There is some cause to admire also the provision of nature in the case of those aquatic animals which are generated on land, such as crocodiles, river-tortoises, and a certain kind of serpents, which seek the water as soon as they are able to drag themselves along. We frequently put duck-eggs under hens, by which, as by their true mothers, the ducklings are at first hatched and nourished; but when they see the water, they forsake them and run to it, as to their natural abode: so strong is the impression of nature in animals for their own preservation.

¹⁵² The proboscis of the elephant is frequently called a hand, because it is as useful to him as one. "They breathe, drink, and smell, with what may not be improperly called a hand," says Pliny, bk. viii. c. 10.—Davis.

XLIX. I have read that there is a bird called Platalea (the shoveller), that lives by watching those fowls which dive into the sea for their prey, and when they return with it, he squeezes their heads with his beak till they drop it, and then seizes on it himself. It is said likewise that he is in the habit of filling his stomach with shell-fish, and when they are digested by the heat which exists in the stomach, they cast them up, and then pick out what is proper nourishment. The sea-frogs, they say, are wont to cover themselves with sand, and moving near the water, the fishes strike at them, as at a bait, and are themselves taken and devoured by the frogs. Between the kite and the crow there is a kind of natural war, and wherever the one finds the eggs of the other, he breaks them.

But who is there who can avoid being struck with wonder at that which has been noticed by Aristotle, who has enriched us with so many valuable remarks? When the cranes¹⁵³ pass the sea in search of warmer climes, they fly in the form of a triangle. By the first angle they repel the resisting air; on each side, their wings serve as oars to facilitate their flight; and the basis of their triangle is assisted by the wind in their stern. Those which are behind rest their necks and heads on those which precede; and as the leader has not the same relief, because he has none to lean upon, he at length flies behind that he may also rest, while one of those which have been eased succeeds him, and through the whole flight each regularly takes his turn.

I could produce many instances of this kind; but these may suffice. Let us now proceed to things more familiar to us. The care of beasts for their own preservation, their circumspection while feeding, and their manner of taking rest in their lairs, are generally known, but still they are greatly to be admired.

L. Dogs cure themselves by a vomit, the Egyptian ibis by a purge; from whence physicians have lately—I mean but few ages since—greatly improved their art. It is reported that panthers, which in barbarous countries are taken with poisoned flesh, have a certain remedy¹⁵⁴ that preserves them from dying; and that in Crete, the wild goats, when they are wounded with poisoned arrows, seek for an herb called dittany, which, when they have tasted, the arrows (they say) drop from their bodies. It is said also that deer, before they fawn, purge themselves with a little herb called hartswort.¹⁵⁵ Beasts, when they receive any hurt, or fear it, have recourse to their natural arms: the bull to his horns, the boar to his tusks, and the lion to his teeth. Some take to flight, others hide themselves; the cuttle-fish vomits¹⁵⁶ blood; the cramp-fish benumbs; and there are many animals that, by their intolerable stink, oblige their pursuers to retire.

LI. But that the beauty of the world might be eternal, great care has been taken by the providence of the Gods to perpetuate the different kinds of animals, and vegetables, and trees, and all those things which sink deep into the earth, and are contained in it by their roots and trunks; in order to which every individual has within itself such fertile seed that many are generated from one; and in vegetables this seed is enclosed in the heart of their fruit, but in such abundance that men may plentifully feed on it, and the earth be always replanted.

¹⁵³ The passage of Aristotle's works to which Cicero here alludes is entirely lost; but Plutarch gives a similar account.

¹⁵⁴ Balbus does not tell us the remedy which the panther makes use of; but Pliny is not quite so delicate: he says, *excrementis hominis sibi medetur*.

¹⁵⁵ Aristotle says they purge themselves with this herb after they fawn. Pliny says both before and after.

¹⁵⁶ The cuttle-fish has a bag at its neck, the black blood of which the Romans used for ink. It was called *atramentum*.

With regard to animals, do we not see how aptly they are formed for the propagation of their species? Nature for this end created some males and some females. Their parts are perfectly framed for generation, and they have a wonderful propensity to copulation. When the seed has fallen on the matrix, it draws almost all the nourishment to itself, by which the foetus is formed; but as soon as it is discharged from thence, if it is an animal that is nourished by milk, almost all the food of the mother turns into milk, and the animal, without any direction but by the pure instinct of nature, immediately hunts for the teat, and is there fed with plenty. What makes it evidently appear that there is nothing in this fortuitous, but the work of a wise and foreseeing nature, is, that those females which bring forth many young, as sows and bitches, have many teats, and those which bear a small number have but few. What tenderness do beasts show in preserving and raising up their young till they are able to defend themselves! They say, indeed, that fish, when they have spawned, leave their eggs; but the water easily supports them, and produces the young fry in abundance.

LII. It is said, likewise, that tortoises and crocodiles, when they have laid their eggs on the land, only cover them with earth, and then leave them, so that their young are hatched and brought up without assistance; but fowls and other birds seek for quiet places to lay in, where they build their nests in the softest manner, for the surest preservation of their eggs; which, when they have hatched, they defend from the cold by the warmth of their wings, or screen them from the sultry heat of the sun. When their young begin to be able to use their wings, they attend and instruct them; and then their cares are at an end.

Human art and industry are indeed necessary towards the preservation and improvement of certain animals and vegetables; for there are several of both kinds which would perish without that assistance. There are likewise innumerable facilities (being different in different places) supplied to man to aid him in his civilization, and in procuring abundantly what he requires. The Nile waters Egypt, and after having overflowed and covered it the whole summer, it retires, and leaves the fields softened and manured for the reception of seed. The Euphrates fertilizes Mesopotamia, into which, as we may say, it carries yearly new fields.¹⁵⁷ The Indus, which is the largest of all rivers,¹⁵⁸ not only improves and cultivates the ground, but sows it also; for it is said to carry with it a great quantity of grain. I could mention many other countries remarkable for something singular, and many fields, which are, in their own natures, exceedingly fertile.

LIII. But how bountiful is nature that has provided for us such an abundance of various and delicious food; and this varying with the different seasons, so that we may be constantly pleased with change, and satisfied with abundance! How seasonable and useful to man, to beasts, and even to vegetables, are the Etesian winds¹⁵⁹ she has bestowed, which moderate intemperate heat, and render navigation more sure and speedy! Many things must be omitted on a subject so copious—and still a great deal must be said—for it is impossible to relate the great utility of rivers, the flux and reflux of the sea, the mountains clothed with grass and trees, the salt-

¹⁵⁷ The Euphrates is said to carry into Mesopotamia a large quantity of citrons, with which it covers the fields.

¹⁵⁸ Q. Curtius, and some other authors, say the Ganges is the largest river in India; but Ammianus Marcellinus concurs with Cicero in calling the river Indus the largest of all rivers.

¹⁵⁹ These Etesian winds return periodically once a year, and blow at certain seasons, and for a certain time.

pits remote from the sea-coasts, the earth replete with salutary medicines, or, in short, the innumerable designs of nature necessary for sustenance and the enjoyment of life. We must not forget the vicissitudes of day and night, ordained for the health of animated beings, giving them a time to labor and a time to rest. Thus, if we every way examine the universe, it is apparent, from the greatest reason, that the whole is admirably governed by a divine providence for the safety and preservation of all beings.

If it should be asked for whose sake this mighty fabric was raised, shall we say for trees and other vegetables, which, though destitute of sense, are supported by nature? That would be absurd. Is it for beasts? Nothing can be less probable than that the Gods should have taken such pains for beings void of speech and understanding. For whom, then, will any one presume to say that the world was made? Undoubtedly for reasonable beings; these are the Gods and men, who are certainly the most perfect of all beings, as nothing is equal to reason. It is therefore credible that the universe, and all things in it, were made for the Gods and for men.

But we may yet more easily comprehend that the Gods have taken great care of the interests and welfare of men, if we examine thoroughly into the structure of the body, and the form and perfection of human nature. There are three things absolutely necessary for the support of life—to eat, to drink, and to breathe. For these operations the mouth is most aptly framed, which, by the assistance of the nostrils, draws in the more air.

LIV. The teeth are there placed to divide and grind the food.¹⁶⁰ The fore-teeth, being sharp and opposite to each other, cut it asunder, and the hind-teeth (called the grinders) chew it, in which office the tongue seems to assist. At the root of the tongue is the gullet, which receives whatever is swallowed: it touches the tonsils on each side, and terminates at the interior extremity of the palate. When, by the motions of the tongue, the food is forced into this passage, it descends, and those parts of the gullet which are below it are dilated, and those above are contracted. There is another passage, called by physicians the rough artery,¹⁶¹ which reaches to the lungs, for the entrance and return of the air we breathe; and as its orifice is joined to the roots of the tongue a little above the part to which the gullet is annexed, it is furnished with a sort of coverlid,¹⁶² lest, by the accidental falling of any food into it, the respiration should be stopped.

As the stomach, which is beneath the gullet, receives the meat and drink, so the lungs and the heart draw in the air from without. The stomach is wonderfully composed, consisting almost wholly of nerves; it abounds with membranes and fibres, and detains what it receives, whether solid or liquid, till it is altered and digested. It sometimes contracts, sometimes dilates. It blends and mixes the food together, so that it is easily concocted and digested by its force of heat, and by the animal spirits is distributed into the other parts of the body.

LV. As to the lungs, they are of a soft and spongy substance, which renders them the most commodious for respiration; they alternately dilate and contract to receive and return the air, that what is the chief animal sustenance may be always fresh. The

¹⁶⁰ Some read *mollitur*, and some *molitur*; the latter of which P. Manucius justly prefers, from the verb *molo*, *molis*; from whence, says he, *molaes dentes*, the grinders.

¹⁶¹ The weasand, or windpipe.

¹⁶² The epiglottis, which is a cartilaginous flap in the shape of a tongue, and therefore called so.

juice,¹⁶³ by which we are nourished, being separated from the rest of the food, passes the stomach and intestines to the liver, through open and direct passages, which lead from the mesentery to the gates of the liver (for so they call those vessels at the entrance of it). There are other passages from thence, through which the food has its course when it has passed the liver. When the bile, and those humors which proceed from the kidneys, are separated from the food, the remaining part turns to blood, and flows to those vessels at the entrance of the liver to which all the passages adjoin. The chyle, being conveyed from this place through them into the vessel called the hollow vein, is mixed together, and, being already digested and distilled, passes into the heart; and from the heart it is communicated through a great number of veins to every part of the body.

It is not difficult to describe how the gross remains are detruded by the motion of the intestines, which contract and dilate; but that must be declined, as too indelicate for discourse. Let us rather explain that other wonder of nature, the air, which is drawn into the lungs, receives heat both by that already in and by the coagitation of the lungs; one part is turned back by respiration, and the other is received into a place called the ventricle of the heart.¹⁶⁴ There is another ventricle like it annexed to the heart, into which the blood flows from the liver through the hollow vein. Thus by one ventricle the blood is diffused to the extremities through the veins, and by the other the breath is communicated through the arteries; and there are such numbers of both dispersed through the whole body that they manifest a divine art.

Why need I speak of the bones, those supports of the body, whose joints are so wonderfully contrived for stability, and to render the limbs complete with regard to motion and to every action of the body? Or need I mention the nerves, by which the limbs are governed—their many interweavings, and their proceeding from the heart,¹⁶⁵ from whence, like the veins and arteries, they have their origin, and are distributed through the whole corporeal frame?

LVI. To this skill of nature, and this care of providence, so diligent and so ingenious, many reflections may be added, which show what valuable things the Deity has bestowed on man. He has made us of a stature tall and upright, in order that we might behold the heavens, and so arrive at the knowledge of the Gods; for men are not simply to dwell here as inhabitants of the earth, but to be, as it were, spectators of the heavens and the stars, which is a privilege not granted to any other kind of animated beings. The senses, which are the interpreters and messengers of things, are placed in the head, as in a tower, and wonderfully situated for their proper uses; for the eyes, being in the highest part, have the office of sentinels, in discovering to us objects; and the ears are conveniently placed in a high part of the person, being appointed to receive sound, which naturally ascends. The nostrils have the like situation, because all scent likewise ascends; and they have, with great reason, a near vicinity to the mouth, because they assist us in judging of meat and drink. The taste, which is to distinguish the quality of what we take; is in that part of the mouth where nature has laid open a passage for what we eat and drink. But the touch is equally diffused through the whole body, that we may not receive any blows, or the too rigid

¹⁶³ Cicero is here giving the opinion of the ancients concerning the passage of the chyle till it is converted to blood.

¹⁶⁴ What Cicero here calls the ventricles of the heart are likewise called auricles, of which there is the right and left.

¹⁶⁵ The Stoics and Peripatetics said that the nerves, veins, and arteries come directly from the heart. According to the anatomy of the moderns, they come from the brain.

attacks of cold and heat, without feeling them. And as in building the architect averts from the eyes and nose of the master those things which must necessarily be offensive, so has nature removed far from our senses what is of the same kind in the human body.

LVII. What artificer but nature, whose direction is incomparable, could have exhibited so much ingenuity in the formation of the senses? In the first place, she has covered and invested the eyes with the finest membranes, which she hath made transparent, that we may see through them, and firm in their texture, to preserve the eyes. She has made them slippery and movable, that they might avoid what would offend them, and easily direct the sight wherever they will. The actual organ of sight, which is called the pupil, is so small that it can easily shun whatever might be hurtful to it. The eyelids, which are their coverings, are soft and smooth, that they may not injure the eyes; and are made to shut at the apprehension of any accident, or to open at pleasure; and these movements nature has ordained to be made in an instant: they are fortified with a sort of palisade of hairs, to keep off what may be noxious to them when open, and to be a fence to their repose when sleep closes them, and allows them to rest as if they were wrapped up in a case. Besides, they are commodiously hidden and defended by eminences on every side; for on the upper part the eyebrows turn aside the perspiration which falls from the head and forehead; the cheeks beneath rise a little, so as to protect them on the lower side; and the nose is placed between them as a wall of separation.

The hearing is always open, for that is a sense of which we are in need even while we are sleeping; and the moment that any sound is admitted by it we are awakened even from sleep. It has a winding passage, lest anything should slip into it, as it might if it were straight and simple. Nature also hath taken the same precaution in making there a viscous humor, that if any little creatures should endeavor to creep in, they might stick in it as in bird-lime. The ears (by which we mean the outward part) are made prominent, to cover and preserve the hearing, lest the sound should be dissipated and escape before the sense is affected. Their entrances are hard and horny, and their form winding, because bodies of this kind better return and increase the sound. This appears in the harp, lute, or horn;¹⁶⁶ and from all tortuous and enclosed places sounds are returned stronger.

The nostrils, in like manner, are ever open, because we have a continual use for them; and their entrances also are rather narrow, lest anything noxious should enter them; and they have always a humidity necessary for the repelling dust and many other extraneous bodies. The taste, having the mouth for an enclosure, is admirably situated, both in regard to the use we make of it and to its security.

LVIII. Besides, every human sense is much more exquisite than those of brutes; for our eyes, in those arts which come under their judgment, distinguish with great nicety; as in painting, sculpture, engraving, and in the gesture and motion of bodies. They understand the beauty, proportion, and, as I may so term it, the becomingness of colors and figures; they distinguish things of greater importance, even virtues and vices; they know whether a man is angry or calm, cheerful or sad, courageous or cowardly, bold or timorous.

The judgment of the ears is not less admirably and scientifically contrived with regard to vocal and instrumental music. They distinguish the variety of sounds, the

¹⁶⁶ The author means all musical instruments, whether string or wind instruments, which are hollow and tortuous.

measure, the stops, the different sorts of voices, the treble and the base, the soft and the harsh, the sharp and the flat, of which human ears only are capable to judge. There is likewise great judgment in the smell, the taste, and the touch; to indulge and gratify which senses more arts have been invented than I could wish: it is apparent to what excess we have arrived in the composition of our perfumes, the preparation of our food, and the enjoyment of corporeal pleasures.

LIX. Again, he who does not perceive the soul and mind of man, his reason, prudence, and discernment, to be the work of a divine providence, seems himself to be destitute of those faculties. While I am on this subject, Cotta, I wish I had your eloquence: how would you illustrate so fine a subject! You would show the great extent of the understanding; how we collect our ideas, and join those which follow to those which precede; establish principles, draw consequences, define things separately, and comprehend them with accuracy; from whence you demonstrate how great is the power of intelligence and knowledge, which is such that even God himself has no qualities more admirable. How valuable (though you Academics despise and even deny that we have it) is our knowledge of exterior objects, from the perception of the senses joined to the application of the mind; by which we see in what relation one thing stands to another, and by the aid of which we have invented those arts which are necessary for the support and pleasure of life. How charming is eloquence! How divine that mistress of the universe, as you call it! It teaches us what we were ignorant of, and makes us capable of teaching what we have learned. By this we exhort others; by this we persuade them; by this we comfort the afflicted; by this we deliver the affrighted from their fear; by this we moderate excessive joy; by this we assuage the passions of lust and anger. This it is which bound men by the chains of right and law, formed the bonds of civil society, and made us quit a wild and savage life.

And it will appear incredible, unless you carefully observe the facts, how complete the work of nature is in giving us the use of speech; for, first of all, there is an artery from the lungs to the bottom of the mouth, through which the voice, having its original principle in the mind, is transmitted. Then the tongue is placed in the mouth, bounded by the teeth. It softens and modulates the voice, which would otherwise be confusedly uttered; and, by pushing it to the teeth and other parts of the mouth, makes the sound distinct and articulate. We Stoics, therefore, compare the tongue to the bow of an instrument, the teeth to the strings, and the nostrils to the sounding-board.

LX. But how commodious are the hands which nature has given to man, and how beautifully do they minister to many arts! For, such is the flexibility of the joints, that our fingers are closed and opened without any difficulty. With their help, the hand is formed for painting, carving, and engraving; for playing on stringed instruments, and on the pipe. These are matters of pleasure. There are also works of necessity, such as tilling the ground, building houses, making cloth and habits, and working in brass and iron. It is the business of the mind to invent, the senses to perceive, and the hands to execute; so that if we have buildings, if we are clothed, if we live in safety, if we have cities, walls, habitations, and temples, it is to the hands we owe them.

By our labor, that is, by our hands, variety and plenty of food are provided; for, without culture, many fruits, which serve either for present or future consumption, would not be produced; besides, we feed on flesh, fish, and fowl, catching some, and bringing up others. We subdue four-footed beasts for our carriage, whose speed and strength supply our slowness and inability. On some we put burdens, on others

yokes. We convert the sagacity of the elephant and the quick scent of the dog to our own advantage. Out of the caverns of the earth we dig iron, a thing entirely necessary for the cultivation of the ground. We discover the hidden veins of copper, silver, and gold, advantageous for our use and beautiful as ornaments. We cut down trees, and use every kind of wild and cultivated timber, not only to make fire to warm us and dress our meat, but also for building, that we may have houses to defend us from the heat and cold. With timber likewise we build ships, which bring us from all parts every commodity of life. We are the only animals who, from our knowledge of navigation, can manage what nature has made the most violent—the sea and the winds. Thus we obtain from the ocean great numbers of profitable things. We are the absolute masters of what the earth produces. We enjoy the mountains and the plains. The rivers and the lakes are ours. We sow the seed, and plant the trees. We fertilize the earth by overflowing it. We stop, direct, and turn the rivers: in short, by our hands we endeavor, by our various operations in this world, to make, as it were, another nature.

LXI. But what shall I say of human reason? Has it not even entered the heavens? Man alone of all animals has observed the courses of the stars, their risings and settings. By man the day, the month, the year, is determined. He foresees the eclipses of the sun and moon, and foretells them to futurity, marking their greatness, duration, and precise time. From the contemplation of these things the mind extracts the knowledge of the Gods—a knowledge which produces piety, with which is connected justice, and all the other virtues; from which arises a life of felicity, inferior to that of the Gods in no single particular, except in immortality, which is not absolutely necessary to happy living. In explaining these things, I think that I have sufficiently demonstrated the superiority of man to other animated beings; from whence we should infer that neither the form and position of his limbs nor that strength of mind and understanding could possibly be the effect of chance.

LXII. I am now to prove, by way of conclusion, that every thing in this world of use to us was made designedly for us.

First of all, the universe was made for the Gods and men, and all things therein were prepared and provided for our service. For the world is the common habitation or city of the Gods and men; for they are the only reasonable beings: they alone live by justice and law. As, therefore, it must be presumed the cities of Athens and Lacedæmon were built for the Athenians and Lacedæmonians, and as everything there is said to belong to those people, so everything in the universe may with propriety be said to belong to the Gods and men, and to them alone.

In the next place, though the revolutions of the sun, moon, and all the stars are necessary for the cohesion of the universe, yet may they be considered also as objects designed for the view and contemplation of man. There is no sight less apt to satiate the eye, none more beautiful, or more worthy to employ our reason and penetration. By measuring their courses we find the different seasons, their durations and vicissitudes, which, if they are known to men alone, we must believe were made only for their sake.

Does the earth bring forth fruit and grain in such excessive abundance and variety for men or for brutes? The plentiful and exhilarating fruit of the vine and the olive-tree are entirely useless to beasts. They know not the time for sowing, tilling, or for reaping in season and gathering in the fruits of the earth, or for laying up and preserving their stores. Man alone has the care and advantage of these things.

LXIII. Thus, as the lute and the pipe were made for those, and those only, who are capable of playing on them, so it must be allowed that the produce of the earth was designed for those only who make use of them; and though some beasts may rob us of a small part, it does not follow that the earth produced it also for them. Men do not store up corn for mice and ants, but for their wives, their children, and their families. Beasts, therefore, as I said before, possess it by stealth, but their masters openly and freely. It is for us, therefore, that nature hath provided this abundance. Can there be any doubt that this plenty and variety of fruit, which delight not only the taste, but the smell and sight, was by nature intended for men only? Beasts are so far from being partakers of this design, that we see that even they themselves were made for man; for of what utility would sheep be, unless for their wool, which, when dressed and woven, serves us for clothing? For they are not capable of anything, not even of procuring their own food, without the care and assistance of man. The fidelity of the dog, his affectionate fawning on his master, his aversion to strangers, his sagacity in finding game, and his vivacity in pursuit of it, what do these qualities denote but that he was created for our use? Why need I mention oxen? We perceive that their backs were not formed for carrying burdens, but their necks were naturally made for the yoke, and their strong broad shoulders to draw the plough. In the Golden Age, which poets speak of, they were so greatly beneficial to the husbandman in tilling the fallow ground that no violence was ever offered them, and it was even thought a crime to eat them:

The Iron Age began the fatal trade
Of blood, and hammer'd the destructive blade;
Then men began to make the ox to bleed,
And on the tamed and docile beast to feed¹⁶⁷.

LXIV. It would take a long time to relate the advantages which we receive from mules and asses, which undoubtedly were designed for our use. What is the swine good for but to eat? whose life, Chrysippus says, was given it but as salt¹⁶⁸ to keep it from putrefying; and as it is proper food for man, nature hath made no animal more fruitful. What a multitude of birds and fishes are taken by the art and contrivance of man only, and which are so delicious to our taste that one would be tempted sometimes to believe that this Providence which watches over us was an Epicurean! Though we think there are some birds—the alites and oscines¹⁶⁹, as our augurs call them—which were made merely to foretell events.

The large savage beasts we take by hunting, partly for food, partly to exercise ourselves in imitation of martial discipline, and to use those we can tame and instruct, as elephants, or to extract remedies for our diseases and wounds, as we do from certain roots and herbs, the virtues of which are known by long use and experience. Represent to yourself the whole earth and seas as if before your eyes. You will see the vast and fertile plains, the thick, shady mountains, the immense pasturage for cattle, and ships sailing over the deep with incredible celerity; nor are our discoveries only on the face of the earth, but in its secret recesses there are many useful things, which being made for man, by man alone are discovered.

¹⁶⁷ The Latin version of Cicero is a translation from the Greek of Aratus.

¹⁶⁸ Chrysippus's meaning is, that the swine is so inactive and slothful a beast that life seems to be of no use to it but to keep it from putrefaction, as salt keeps dead flesh.

¹⁶⁹ *Ales*, in the general signification, is any large bird; and *oscinis* is any singing bird. But they here mean those birds which are used in augury: *alites* are the birds whose flight was observed by the augurs, and *oscines* the birds from whose voices they augured.

LXV. Another, and in my opinion the strongest, proof that the providence of the Gods takes care of us is divination, which both of you, perhaps, will attack; you, Cotta, because Carneades took pleasure in inveighing against the Stoics; and you, Velleius, because there is nothing Epicurus ridicules so much as the prediction of events. Yet the truth of divination appears in many places, on many occasions, often in private, but particularly in public concerns. We receive many intimations from the foresight and presages of augurs and auspices; from oracles, prophecies, dreams, and prodigies; and it often happens that by these means events have proved happy to men, and imminent dangers have been avoided. This knowledge, therefore—call it either a kind of transport, or an art, or a natural faculty—is certainly found only in men, and is a gift from the immortal Gods. If these proofs, when taken separately, should make no impression upon your mind, yet, when collected together, they must certainly affect you.

Besides, the Gods not only provide for mankind universally, but for particular men. You may bring this universality to gradually a smaller number, and again you may reduce that smaller number to individuals.

LXVI. For if the reasons which I have given prove to all of us that the Gods take care of all men, in every country, in every part of the world separate from our continent, they take care of those who dwell on the same land with us, from east to west; and if they regard those who inhabit this kind of great island, which we call the globe of the earth, they have the like regard for those who possess the parts of this island—Europe, Asia, and Africa; and therefore they favor the parts of these parts, as Rome, Athens, Sparta, and Rhodes; and particular men of these cities, separate from the whole; as Curius, Fabricius, Coruncanius, in the war with Pyrrhus; in the first Punic war, Calatinus, Duillius, Metellus, Lutatius; in the second, Maximus, Marcellus, Africanus; after these, Paullus, Gracchus, Cato; and in our fathers' times, Scipio, Lælius. Rome also and Greece have produced many illustrious men, who we cannot believe were so without the assistance of the Deity; which is the reason that the poets, Homer in particular, joined their chief heroes—Ulysses, Agamemnon, Diomedes, Achilles—to certain Deities, as companions in their adventures and dangers. Besides, the frequent appearances of the Gods, as I have before mentioned, demonstrate their regard for cities and particular men. This is also apparent indeed from the foreknowledge of events, which we receive either sleeping or waking. We are likewise forewarned of many things by the entrails of victims, by presages, and many other means, which have been long observed with such exactness as to produce an art of divination.

There never, therefore, was a great man without divine inspiration. If a storm should damage the corn or vineyard of a person, or any accident should deprive him of some conveniences of life, we should not judge from thence that the Deity hates or neglects him. The Gods take care of great things, and disregard the small. But to truly great men all things ever happen prosperously; as has been sufficiently asserted and proved by us Stoics, as well as by Socrates, the prince of philosophers, in his discourses on the infinite advantages arising from virtue.

LXVII. This is almost the whole that hath occurred to my mind on the nature of the Gods, and what I thought proper to advance. Do you, Cotta, if I may advise, defend the same cause. Remember that in Rome you keep the first rank; remember that you are Pontifex; and as your school is at liberty to argue on which side you please¹⁷⁰, do

¹⁷⁰ As the Academics doubted everything, it was indifferent to them which side of a question they took.

you rather take mine, and reason on it with that eloquence which you acquired by your rhetorical exercises, and which the Academy improved; for it is a pernicious and impious custom to argue against the Gods, whether it be done seriously, or only in pretence and out of sport.

Book III

I. When Balbus had ended this discourse, then Cotta, with a smile, rejoined, You direct me too late which side to defend; for during the course of your argument I was revolving in my mind what objections to make to what you were saying, not so much for the sake of opposition, as of obliging you to explain what I did not perfectly comprehend; and as every one may use his own judgment, it is scarcely possible for me to think in every instance exactly what you wish.

You have no idea, O Cotta, said Velleius, how impatient I am to hear what you have to say. For since our friend Balbus was highly delighted with your discourse against Epicurus, I ought in my turn to be solicitous to hear what you can say against the Stoics; and I therefore will give you my best attention, for I believe you are, as usual, well prepared for the engagement.

I wish, by Hercules! I were, replies Cotta; for it is more difficult to dispute with Lucilius than it was with you. Why so? says Velleius. Because, replies Cotta, your Epicurus, in my opinion, does not contend strongly for the Gods: he only, for the sake of avoiding any unpopularity or punishment, is afraid to deny their existence; for when he asserts that the Gods are wholly inactive and regardless of everything, and that they have limbs like ours, but make no use of them, he seems to jest with us, and to think it sufficient if he allows that there are beings of any kind happy and eternal. But with regard to Balbus, I suppose you observed how many things were said by him, which, however false they may be, yet have a perfect coherence and connection; therefore, my design, as I said, in opposing him, is not so much to confute his principles as to induce him to explain what I do not clearly understand: for which reason, Balbus, I will give you the choice, either to answer me every particular as I go on, or permit me to proceed without interruption. If you want any explanation, replies Balbus, I would rather you would propose your doubts singly; but if your intention is rather to confute me than to seek instruction for yourself, it shall be as you please; I will either answer you immediately on every point, or stay till you have finished your discourse.

II. Very well, says Cotta; then let us proceed as our conversation shall direct. But before I enter on the subject, I have a word to say concerning myself; for I am greatly influenced by your authority, and your exhortation at the conclusion of your discourse, when you desired me to remember that I was Cotta and Pontifex; by which I presume you intimated that I should defend the sacred rites and religion and ceremonies which we received from our ancestors. Most undoubtedly I always have, and always shall defend them, nor shall the arguments either of the learned or unlearned ever remove the opinions which I have imbibed from them concerning the worship of the immortal Gods. In matters of religion I submit to the rules of the high-priests, T. Coruncanius, P. Scipio, and P. Scævola; not to the sentiments of Zeno, Cleanthes, or Chrysippus; and I pay a greater regard to what C. Lælius, one of our augurs and wise men, has written concerning religion, in that noble oration of his, than to the most eminent of the Stoics: and as the whole religion of the Romans at first consisted in sacrifices and divination by birds, to which have since been added

predictions, if the interpreters¹⁷¹ of the Sibylline oracle or the aruspices have foretold any event from portents and prodigies, I have ever thought that there was no point of all these holy things which deserved to be despised. I have been even persuaded that Romulus, by instituting divination, and Numa, by establishing sacrifices, laid the foundation of Rome, which undoubtedly would never have risen to such a height of grandeur if the Gods had not been made propitious by this worship. These, Balbus, are my sentiments both as a priest and as Cotta. But you must bring me to your opinion by the force of your reason: for I have a right to demand from you, as a philosopher, a reason for the religion which you would have me embrace. But I must believe the religion of our ancestors without any proof.

III. What proof, says Balbus, do you require of me? You have proposed, says Cotta, four articles. First of all, you undertook to prove that there “are Gods;” secondly, “of what kind and character they are;” thirdly, that “the universe is governed by them;” lastly, that “they provide for the welfare of mankind in particular.” Thus, if I remember rightly, you divided your discourse. Exactly so, replies Balbus; but let us see what you require.

Let us examine, says Cotta, every proposition. The first one—that there are Gods—is never contested but by the most impious of men; nay, though it can never be rooted out of my mind, yet I believe it on the authority of our ancestors, and not on the proofs which you have brought. Why do you expect a proof from me, says Balbus, if you thoroughly believe it? Because, says Cotta, I come to this discussion as if I had never thought of the Gods, or heard anything concerning them. Take me as a disciple wholly ignorant and unbiassed, and prove to me all the points which I ask.

Begin, then, replies Balbus. I would first know, says Cotta, why you have been so long in proving the existence of the Gods, which you said was a point so very evident to all, that there was no need of any proof? In that, answers Balbus, I have followed your example, whom I have often observed, when pleading in the Forum, to load the judge with all the arguments which the nature of your cause would permit. This also is the practice of philosophers, and I have a right to follow it. Besides, you may as well ask me why I look upon you with two eyes, since I can see you with one.

IV. You shall judge, then, yourself, says Cotta, if this is a very just comparison; for, when I plead, I do not dwell upon any point agreed to be self-evident, because long reasoning only serves to confound the clearest matters; besides, though I might take this method in pleading, yet I should not make use of it in such a discourse as this, which requires the nicest distinction. And with regard to your making use of one eye only when you look on me, there is no reason for it, since together they have the same view; and since nature, to which you attribute wisdom, has been pleased to give us two passages by which we receive light. But the truth is, that it was because you did not think that the existence of the Gods was so evident as you could wish that you therefore brought so many proofs. It was sufficient for me to believe it on the tradition of our ancestors; and since you disregard authorities, and appeal to reason, permit my reason to defend them against yours. The proofs on which you found the existence of the Gods tend only to render a proposition doubtful that, in my opinion, is not so; I have not only retained in my memory the whole of these proofs, but even the order in which you proposed them. The first was, that when we lift up our eyes towards the heavens, we immediately conceive that there is some divinity that governs those celestial bodies; on which you quoted this passage—

¹⁷¹ The keepers and interpreters of the Sibylline oracles were the Quindecimviri.

Look up to the refulgent heaven above,
Which all men call, unanimously, Jove;

intimating that we should invoke that as Jupiter, rather than our Capitoline Jove¹⁷², or that it is evident to the whole world that those bodies are Gods which Velleius and many others do not place even in the rank of animated beings.

Another strong proof, in your opinion, was that the belief of the existence of the Gods was universal, and that mankind was daily more and more convinced of it. What! should an affair of such importance be left to the decision of fools, who, by your sect especially, are called madmen?

V. But the Gods have appeared to us, as to Posthumius at the Lake Regillus, and to Vatienus in the Salarian Way: something you mentioned, too, I know not what, of a battle of the Locrians at Sagra. Do you believe that the Tyndaridæ, as you called them; that is, men sprung from men, and who were buried in Lacedæmon, as we learn from Homer, who lived in the next age—do you believe, I say, that they appeared to Vatienus on the road mounted on white horses, without any servant to attend them, to tell the victory of the Romans to a country fellow rather than to M. Cato, who was at that time the chief person of the senate? Do you take that print of a horse's hoof which is now to be seen on a stone at Regillus to be made by Castor's horse? Should you not believe, what is probable, that the souls of eminent men, such as the Tyndaridæ, are divine and immortal, rather than that those bodies which had been reduced to ashes should mount on horses, and fight in an army? If you say that was possible, you ought to show how it is so, and not amuse us with fabulous old women's stories.

Do you take these for fabulous stories? says Balbus. Is not the temple, built by Posthumius in honor of Castor and Pollux, to be seen in the Forum? Is not the decree of the senate concerning Vatienus still subsisting? As to the affair of Sagra, it is a common proverb among the Greeks; when they would affirm anything strongly, they say "It is as certain as what passed at Sagra." Ought not such authorities to move you? You oppose me, replies Cotta, with stories, but I ask reasons of you¹⁷³. * * *

VI. We are now to speak of predictions. No one can avoid what is to come, and, indeed, it is commonly useless to know it; for it is a miserable case to be afflicted to no purpose, and not to have even the last, the common comfort, hope, which, according to your principles, none can have; for you say that fate governs all things, and call that fate which has been true from all eternity. What advantage, then, is the knowledge of futurity to us, or how does it assist us to guard against impending evils, since it will come inevitably?

But whence comes that divination? To whom is owing that knowledge from the entrails of beasts? Who first made observations from the voice of the crow? Who invented the Lots?¹⁷⁴ Not that I give no credit to these things, or that I despise Attius Navius's staff, which you mentioned; but I ought to be informed how these things are understood by philosophers, especially as the diviners are often wrong in their conjectures. But physicians, you say, are likewise often mistaken. What comparison

¹⁷² The popular name of Jupiter in Rome, being looked upon as defender of the Capitol (in which he was placed), and stayer of the State.

¹⁷³ Some passages of the original are here wanting. Cotta continues speaking against the doctrine of the Stoics.

¹⁷⁴ The word *sortes* is often used for the answers of the oracles, or, rather, for the rolls in which the answers were written.

can there be between divination, of the origin of which we are ignorant, and physic, which proceeds on principles intelligible to every one? You believe that the Decii,¹⁷⁵ in devoting themselves to death, appeased the Gods. How great, then, was the iniquity of the Gods that they could not be appeased but at the price of such noble blood! That was the stratagem of generals such as the Greeks call στρατήγημα, and it was a stratagem worthy such illustrious leaders, who consulted the public good even at the expense of their lives: they conceived rightly, what indeed happened, that if the general rode furiously upon the enemy, the whole army would follow his example. As to the voice of the Fauns, I never heard it. If you assure me that you have, I shall believe you, though I really know not what a Faun is.

VII. I do not, then, O Balbus, from anything that you have said, perceive as yet that it is proved that there are Gods. I believe it, indeed, but not from any arguments of the Stoics. Cleanthes, you have said, attributes the idea that men have of the Gods to four causes. In the first place (as I have already sufficiently mentioned), to a foreknowledge of future events; secondly, to tempests, and other shocks of nature; thirdly, to the utility and plenty of things we enjoy; fourthly, to the invariable order of the stars and the heavens. The arguments drawn from foreknowledge I have already answered. With regard to tempests in the air, the sea, and the earth, I own that many people are affrighted by them, and imagine that the immortal Gods are the authors of them.

But the question is, not whether there are people who believe that there are Gods, but whether there are Gods or not. As to the two other causes of Cleanthes, one of which is derived from the great abundance of desirable things which we enjoy, the other from the invariable order of the seasons and the heavens, I shall treat on them when I answer your discourse concerning the providence of the Gods—a point, Balbus, upon which you have spoken at great length. I shall likewise defer till then examining the argument which you attribute to Chrysippus, that “if there is in nature anything which surpasses the power of man to produce, there must consequently be some being better than man.” I shall also postpone, till we come to that part of my argument, your comparison of the world to a fine house, your observations on the proportion and harmony of the universe, and those smart, short reasons of Zeno which you quote; and I shall examine at the same time your reasons drawn from natural philosophy, concerning that fiery force and that vital heat which you regard as the principle of all things; and I will investigate, in its proper place, all that you advanced the other day on the existence of the Gods, and on the sense and understanding which you attributed to the sun, the moon, and all the stars; and I shall ask you this question over and over again, By what proofs are you convinced yourself there are Gods?

VIII. I thought, says Balbus, that I had brought ample proofs to establish this point. But such is your manner of opposing, that, when you seem on the point of interrogating me, and when I am preparing to answer, you suddenly divert the discourse, and give me no opportunity to reply to you; and thus those most important points concerning divination and fate are neglected which we Stoics have thoroughly examined, but which your school has only slightly touched upon. But they are not thought essential to the question in hand; therefore, if you think proper, do

¹⁷⁵ Three of this eminent family sacrificed themselves for their country; the father in the Latin war, the son in the Tuscan war, and the grandson in the war with Pyrrhus.

not confuse them together, that we in this discussion may come to a clear explanation of the subject of our present inquiry.

Very well, says Cotta. Since, then, you have divided the whole question into four parts, and I have said all that I had to say on the first, I will take the second into consideration; in which, when you attempted to show what the character of the Gods was, you seemed to me rather to prove that there are none; for you said that it was the greatest difficulty to draw our minds from the prepossessions of the eyes; but that as nothing is more excellent than the Deity, you did not doubt that the world was God, because there is nothing better in nature than the world, and so we may reasonably think it animated, or, rather, perceive it in our minds as clearly as if it were obvious to our eyes.

Now, in what sense do you say there is nothing better than the world? If you mean that there is nothing more beautiful, I agree with you; that there is nothing more adapted to our wants, I likewise agree with you: but if you mean that nothing is wiser than the world, I am by no means of your opinion. Not that I find it difficult to conceive anything in my mind independent of my eyes; on the contrary, the more I separate my mind from my eyes, the less I am able to comprehend your opinion.

IX. Nothing is better than the world, you say. Nor is there, indeed, anything on earth better than the city of Rome; do you think, therefore, that our city has a mind; that it thinks and reasons; or that this most beautiful city, being void of sense, is not preferable to an ant, because an ant has sense, understanding, reason, and memory? You should consider, Balbus, what ought to be allowed you, and not advance things because they please you.

For that old, concise, and, as it seemed to you, acute syllogism of Zeno has been all which you have so much enlarged upon in handling this topic: "That which reasons is superior to that which does not; nothing is superior to the world; therefore the world reasons." If you would prove also that the world can very well read a book, follow the example of Zeno, and say, "That which can read is better than that which cannot; nothing is better than the world; the world therefore can read." After the same manner you may prove the world to be an orator, a mathematician, a musician—that it possesses all sciences, and, in short, is a philosopher. You have often said that God made all things, and that no cause can produce an effect unlike itself. From hence it will follow, not only that the world is animated, and is wise, but also plays upon the fiddle and the flute, because it produces men who play on those instruments. Zeno, therefore, the chief of your sect, advances no argument sufficient to induce us to think that the world reasons, or, indeed, that it is animated at all, and consequently none to think it a Deity; though it may be said that there is nothing superior to it, as there is nothing more beautiful, nothing more useful to us, nothing more adorned, and nothing more regular in its motions. But if the world, considered as one great whole, is not God, you should not surely deify, as you have done, that infinite multitude of stars which only form a part of it, and which so delight you with the regularity of their eternal courses; not but that there is something truly wonderful and incredible in their regularity; but this regularity of motion, Balbus, may as well be ascribed to a natural as to a divine cause.

X. What can be more regular than the flux and reflux of the Euripus at Chalcis, the Sicilian sea, and the violence of the ocean in those parts¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ The Straits of Gibraltar.

where the rapid tide
Does Europe from the Libyan coast divide?

The same appears on the Spanish and British coasts. Must we conclude that some Deity appoints and directs these ebbings and flowings to certain fixed times? Consider, I pray, if everything which is regular in its motion is deemed divine, whether it will not follow that tertian and quartan agues must likewise be so, as their returns have the greatest regularity. These effects are to be explained by reason; but, because you are unable to assign any, you have recourse to a Deity as your last refuge.

The arguments of Chrysippus appeared to you of great weight; a man undoubtedly of great quickness and subtlety (I call those quick who have a sprightly turn of thought, and those subtle whose minds are seasoned by use as their hands are by labor): "If," says he, "there is anything which is beyond the power of man to produce, the being who produces it is better than man. Man is unable to make what is in the world; the being, therefore, that could do it is superior to man. What being is there but a God superior to man? Therefore there is a God."

These arguments are founded on the same erroneous principles as Zeno's, for he does not define what is meant by being better or more excellent, or distinguish between an intelligent cause and a natural cause. Chrysippus adds, "If there are no Gods, there is nothing better than man; but we cannot, without the highest arrogance, have this idea of ourselves." Let us grant that it is arrogance in man to think himself better than the world; but to comprehend that he has understanding and reason, and that in Orion and Canicula there is neither, is no arrogance, but an indication of good sense. "Since we suppose," continues he, "when we see a beautiful house, that it was built for the master, and not for mice, we should likewise judge that the world is the mansion of the Gods." Yes, if I believed that the Gods built the world; but not if, as I believe, and intend to prove, it is the work of nature.

XI. Socrates, in Xenophon, asks, "Whence had man his understanding, if there was none in the world?" And I ask, Whence had we speech, harmony, singing; unless we think it is the sun conversing with the moon when she approaches near it, or that the world forms an harmonious concert, as Pythagoras imagines? This, Balbus, is the effect of nature; not of that nature which proceeds artificially, as Zeno says, and the character of which I shall presently examine into, but a nature which, by its own proper motions and mutations, modifies everything.

For I readily agree to what you said about the harmony and general agreement of nature, which you pronounced to be firmly bound and united together, as it were, by ties of blood; but I do not approve of what you added, that "it could not possibly be so, unless it were so united by one divine spirit." On the contrary, the whole subsists by the power of nature, independently of the Gods, and there is a kind of sympathy (as the Greeks call it) which joins together all the parts of the universe; and the greater that is in its own power, the less is it necessary to have recourse to a divine intelligence.

XII. But how will you get rid of the objections which Carneades made? "If," says he, "there is no body immortal, there is none eternal; but there is no body immortal, nor even indivisible, or that cannot be separated and disunited; and as every animal is in its nature passive, so there is not one which is not subject to the impressions of extraneous bodies; none, that is to say, which can avoid the necessity of enduring and suffering: and if every animal is mortal, there is none immortal; so, likewise, if every

animal may be cut up and divided, there is none indivisible, none eternal, but all are liable to be affected by, and compelled to submit to, external power. Every animal, therefore, is necessarily mortal, dissoluble, and divisible.”

For as there is no wax, no silver, no brass which cannot be converted into something else, whatever is composed of wax, or silver, or brass may cease to be what it is. By the same reason, if all the elements are mutable, every body is mutable.

Now, according to your doctrine, all the elements are mutable; all bodies, therefore, are mutable. But if there were any body immortal, then all bodies would not be mutable. Every body, then, is mortal; for every body is either water, air, fire, or earth, or composed of the four elements together, or of some of them. Now, there is not one of all these elements that does not perish; for earthly bodies are fragile: water is so soft that the least shock will separate its parts, and fire and air yield to the least impulse, and are subject to dissolution; besides, any of these elements perish when converted into another nature, as when water is formed from earth, the air from water, and the sky from air, and when they change in the same manner back again. Therefore, if there is nothing but what is perishable in the composition of all animals, there is no animal eternal.

XIII. But, not to insist on these arguments, there is no animal to be found that had not a beginning, and will not have an end; for every animal being sensitive, they are consequently all sensible of cold and heat, sweet and bitter; nor can they have pleasing sensations without being subject to the contrary. As, therefore, they receive pleasure, they likewise receive pain; and whatever being is subject to pain must necessarily be subject to death. It must be allowed, therefore, that every animal is mortal.

Besides, a being that is not sensible of pleasure or pain cannot have the essence of an animal; if, then, on the one hand, every animal must be sensible of pleasure and pain, and if, on the other, every being that has these sensations cannot be immortal, we may conclude that as there is no animal insensible, there is none immortal. Besides, there is no animal without inclination and aversion—an inclination to that which is agreeable to nature, and an aversion to the contrary: there are in the case of every animal some things which they covet, and others they reject. What they reject are repugnant to their nature, and consequently would destroy them. Every animal, therefore, is inevitably subject to be destroyed. There are innumerable arguments to prove that whatever is sensitive is perishable; for cold, heat, pleasure, pain, and all that affects the sense, when they become excessive, cause destruction. Since, then, there is no animal that is not sensitive, there is none immortal.

XIV. The substance of an animal is either simple or compound; simple, if it is composed only of earth, of fire, of air, or of water (and of such a sort of being we can form no idea); compound, if it is formed of different elements, which have each their proper situation, and have a natural tendency to it—this element tending towards the highest parts, that towards the lowest, and another towards the middle. This conjunction may for some time subsist, but not forever; for every element must return to its first situation. No animal, therefore, is eternal.

But your school, Balbus, allows fire only to be the sole active principle; an opinion which I believe you derive from Heraclitus, whom some men understand in one sense, some in another: but since he seems unwilling to be understood, we will pass him by. You Stoics, then, say that fire is the universal principle of all things; that all living bodies cease to live on the extinction of that heat; and that throughout all

nature whatever is sensible of that heat lives and flourishes. Now, I cannot conceive that bodies should perish for want of heat, rather than for want of moisture or air, especially as they even die through excess of heat; so that the life of animals does not depend more on fire than on the other elements.

However, air and water have this quality in common with fire and heat. But let us see to what this tends. If I am not mistaken, you believe that in all nature there is nothing but fire, which is self-animated. Why fire rather than air, of which the life of animals consists, and which is called from thence *anima*,¹⁷⁷ the soul? But how is it that you take it for granted that life is nothing but fire? It seems more probable that it is a compound of fire and air. But if fire is self-animated, unmixed with any other element, it must be sensitive, because it renders our bodies sensitive; and the same objection which I just now made will arise, that whatever is sensitive must necessarily be susceptible of pleasure and pain, and whatever is sensible of pain is likewise subject to the approach of death; therefore you cannot prove fire to be eternal.

You Stoics hold that all fire has need of nourishment, without which it cannot possibly subsist; that the sun, moon, and all the stars are fed either with fresh or salt waters; and the reason that Cleanthes gives why the sun is retrograde, and does not go beyond the tropics in the summer or winter, is that he may not be too far from his sustenance. This I shall fully examine hereafter; but at present we may conclude that whatever may cease to be cannot of its own nature be eternal; that if fire wants sustenance, it will cease to be, and that, therefore, fire is not of its own nature eternal.

XV. After all, what kind of a Deity must that be who is not graced with one single virtue, if we should succeed in forming this idea of such a one? Must we not attribute prudence to a Deity? a virtue which consists in the knowledge of things good, bad, and indifferent. Yet what need has a being for the discernment of good and ill who neither has nor can have any ill? Of what use is reason to him? of what use is understanding? We men, indeed, find them useful to aid us in finding out things which are obscure by those which are clear to us; but nothing can be obscure to a Deity. As to justice, which gives to every one his own, it is not the concern of the Gods; since that virtue, according to your doctrine, received its birth from men and from civil society. Temperance consists in abstinence from corporeal pleasures, and if such abstinence hath a place in heaven, so also must the pleasures abstained from. Lastly, if fortitude is ascribed to the Deity, how does it appear? In afflictions, in labor, in danger? None of these things can affect a God. How, then, can we conceive this to be a Deity that makes no use of reason, and is not endowed with any virtue?

However, when I consider what is advanced by the Stoics, my contempt for the ignorant multitude vanishes. For these are their divinities. The Syrians worshipped a fish. The Egyptians consecrated beasts of almost every kind. The Greeks deified many men; as Alabandus¹⁷⁸ at Alabandæ, Tenes at Tenedos; and all Greece pay divine honors to Leucothea (who was before called Ino), to her son Palæmon, to

¹⁷⁷ The common reading is, *ex quo anima dicitur*; but Dr. Davis and M. Bouhier prefer *animal*, though they keep *anima* in the text, because our author says elsewhere, *animum ex anima dictum*, Tusc. I. 1. Cicero is not here to be accused of contradictions, for we are to consider that he speaks in the characters of other persons; but there appears to be nothing in these two passages irreconcilable, and probably *anima* is the right word here.

¹⁷⁸ He is said to have led a colony from Greece into Caria, in Asia, and to have built a town, and called it after his own name, for which his countrymen paid him divine honors after his death.

Hercules, to Æsculapius, and to the Tyndaridæ; our own people to Romulus, and to many others, who, as citizens newly admitted into the ancient body, they imagine have been received into heaven.

These are the Gods of the illiterate.

XVI. What are the notions of you philosophers? In what respect are they superior to these ideas? I shall pass them over; for they are certainly very admirable. Let the world, then, be a Deity, for that, I conceive, is what you mean by

The refulgent heaven above,
Which all men call, unanimously, Jove.

But why are we to add many more Gods? What a multitude of them there is! At least, it seems so to me; for every constellation, according to you, is a Deity: to some you give the name of beasts, as the goat, the scorpion, the bull, the lion; to others the names of inanimate things, as the ship, the altar, the crown.

But supposing these were to be allowed, how can the rest be granted, or even so much as understood? When we call corn Ceres, and wine Bacchus, we make use of the common manner of speaking; but do you think any one so mad as to believe that his food is a Deity? With regard to those who, you say, from having been men became Gods, I should be very willing to learn of you, either how it was possible formerly, or, if it had ever been, why is it not so now? I do not conceive, as things are at present, how Hercules,

Burn'd with fiery torches on Mount Ceta,
as Accius says, should rise, with the flames,
To the eternal mansions of his father.

Besides, Homer also says that Ulysses¹⁷⁹ met him in the shades below, among the other dead.

But yet I should be glad to know which Hercules we should chiefly worship; for they who have searched into those histories, which are but little known, tell us of several. The most ancient is he who fought with Apollo about the Tripod of Delphi, and is son of Jupiter and Lisyto; and of the most ancient Jupiters too, for we find many Jupiters also in the Grecian chronicles. The second is the Egyptian Hercules, and is believed to be the son of Nilus, and to be the author of the Phrygian characters. The third, to whom they offered sacrifices, is one of the Idæi Dactyli.¹⁸⁰ The fourth is the son of Jupiter and Asteria, the sister of Latona, chiefly honored by the Tyrians, who pretend that Carthago¹⁸¹ is his daughter. The fifth, called Belus, is worshipped in India. The

¹⁷⁹ Our great author is under a mistake here. Homer does not say he met Hercules himself, but his Εἰδωλον, his "visionary likeness;" and adds that he himself

μετ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
τέρπεται ἐν θαλίῃς, καὶ ἔχει καλλίσφυρον Ἥβην,
παῖδα Διὸς μέγαλοιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδῖλου.
which Pope translates—

A shadowy form, for high in heaven's abodes
Himself resides, a God among the Gods;
There, in the bright assemblies of the skies,
He nectar quaffs, and Hebe crowns his joys.

¹⁸⁰ They are said to have been the first workers in iron. They were called Idæi, because they inhabited about Mount Ida in Crete, and Dactyli, from δάκτυλοι (the fingers), their number being five.

¹⁸¹ From whom, some say, the city of that name was called.

sixth is the son of Alcmena by Jupiter; but by the third Jupiter, for there are many Jupiters, as you shall soon see.

XVII. Since this examination has led me so far, I will convince you that in matters of religion I have learned more from the pontifical rites, the customs of our ancestors, and the vessels of Numa,¹⁸² which Lælius mentions in his little Golden Oration, than from all the learning of the Stoics; for tell me, if I were a disciple of your school, what answer could I make to these questions? If there are Gods, are nymphs also Goddesses? If they are Goddesses, are Pans and Satyrs in the same rank? But they are not; consequently, nymphs are not Goddesses. Yet they have temples publicly dedicated to them. What do you conclude from thence? Others who have temples are not therefore Gods. But let us go on. You call Jupiter and Neptune Gods; their brother Pluto, then, is one; and if so, those rivers also are Deities which they say flow in the infernal regions—Acheron, Cocytus, Pyriphlegethon; Charon also, and Cerberus, are Gods; but that cannot be allowed; nor can Pluto be placed among the Deities. What, then, will you say of his brothers?

Thus reasons Carneades; not with any design to destroy the existence of the Gods (for what would less become a philosopher?), but to convince us that on that matter the Stoics have said nothing plausible. If, then, Jupiter and Neptune are Gods, adds he, can that divinity be denied to their father Saturn, who is principally worshipped throughout the West? If Saturn is a God, then must his father, Cœlus, be one too, and so must the parents of Cœlus, which are the Sky and Day, as also their brothers and sisters, which by ancient genealogists are thus named: Love, Deceit, Fear, Labor, Envy, Fate, Old Age, Death, Darkness, Misery, Lamentation, Favor, Fraud, Obstinacy, the Destinies, the Hesperides, and Dreams; all which are the offspring of Erebus and Night. These monstrous Deities, therefore, must be received, or else those from whom they sprung must be disallowed.

XVIII. If you say that Apollo, Vulcan, Mercury, and the rest of that sort are Gods, can you doubt the divinity of Hercules and Æsculapius, Bacchus, Castor and Pollux? These are worshipped as much as those, and even more in some places. Therefore they must be numbered among the Gods, though on the mother's side they are only of mortal race. Aristæus, who is said to have been the son of Apollo, and to have found out the art of making oil from the olive; Theseus, the son of Neptune; and the rest whose fathers were Deities, shall they not be placed in the number of the Gods? But what think you of those whose mothers were Goddesses? They surely have a better title to divinity; for, in the civil law, as he is a freeman who is born of a freewoman, so, in the law of nature, he whose mother is a Goddess must be a God. The isle Astypalæa religiously honor Achilles; and if he is a Deity, Orpheus and Rhesus are so, who were born of one of the Muses; unless, perhaps, there may be a privilege belonging to sea marriages which land marriages have not. Orpheus and Rhesus are nowhere worshipped; and if they are therefore not Gods, because they are nowhere worshipped as such, how can the others be Deities? You, Balbus, seemed to agree with me that the honors which they received were not from their being regarded as immortals, but as men richly endued with virtue.

But if you think Latona a Goddess, how can you avoid admitting Hecate to be one also, who was the daughter of Asteria, Latona's sister? Certainly she is one, if we may judge by the altars erected to her in Greece. And if Hecate is a Goddess, how can you

¹⁸² Capedunculæ seem to have been bowls or cups, with handles on each side, set apart for the use of the altar.—Davis.

refuse that rank to the Eumenides? for they also have a temple at Athens, and, if I understand right, the Romans have consecrated a grove to them. The Furies, too, whom we look upon as the inspectors into and scourges of impiety, I suppose, must have their divinity too. As you hold that there is some divinity presides over every human affair, there is one who presides over the travail of matrons, whose name, *Natio*, is derived *a nascentibus*, from nativities, and to whom we used to sacrifice in our processions in the fields of *Ardæa*; but if she is a Deity, we must likewise acknowledge all those you mentioned, Honor, Faith, Intellect, Concord; by the same rule also, Hope, Juno, Moneta,¹⁸³ and every idle phantom, every child of our imagination, are Deities. But as this consequence is quite inadmissible, do not you either defend the cause from which it flows.

XIX. What say you to this? If these are Deities, which we worship and regard as such, why are not Serapis and Isis¹⁸⁴ placed in the same rank? And if they are admitted, what reason have we to reject the Gods of the barbarians? Thus we should deify oxen, horses, the ibis, hawks, asps, crocodiles, fishes, dogs, wolves, cats, and many other beasts. If we go back to the source of this superstition, we must equally condemn all the Deities from which they proceed. Shall Ino, whom the Greeks call *Leucothea*, and we *Matuta*, be reputed a Goddess, because she was the daughter of *Cadmus*, and shall that title be refused to *Circe* and *Pasiphae*,¹⁸⁵ who had the sun for their father, and *Perseis*, daughter of the Ocean, for their mother? It is true, *Circe* has divine honors paid her by our colony of *Circæum*; therefore you call her a Goddess; but what will you say of *Medea*, the granddaughter of the Sun and the Ocean, and daughter of *Æetes* and *Idyia*? What will you say of her brother *Absyrtus*, whom *Pacuvius* calls *Ægialeus*, though the other name is more frequent in the writings of the ancients? If you did not deify one as well as the other, what will become of *Ino*? for all these Deities have the same origin.

Shall *Amphiaraus* and *Tryphonius* be called Gods? Our publicans, when some lands in *Bœotia* were exempted from the tax, as belonging to the immortal Gods, denied that any were immortal who had been men. But if you deify these, *Erechtheus* surely is a God, whose temple and priest we have seen at Athens. And can you, then, refuse to acknowledge also *Codrus*, and many others who shed their blood for the preservation of their country? And if it is not allowable to consider all these men as Gods, then, certainly, probabilities are not in favor of our acknowledging the *Divinity* of those previously mentioned beings from whom these have proceeded.

It is easy to observe, likewise, that if in many countries people have paid divine honors to the memory of those who have signalized their courage, it was done in order to animate others to practise virtue, and to expose themselves the more willingly to dangers in their country's cause. From this motive the Athenians have deified *Erechtheus* and his daughters, and have erected also a temple, called *Leocorion*, to the daughters of *Leus*.¹⁸⁶ *Alabandus* is more honored in the city which he founded than any of the more illustrious Deities; from thence *Stratonicus* had a pleasant turn—as he had many—when he was troubled with an impertinent fellow

¹⁸³ See Cicero de Divinatione, and Ovid. Fast.

¹⁸⁴ In the consulship of *Piso* and *Gabinus* sacrifices to *Serapis* and *Isis* were prohibited in Rome; but the Roman people afterward placed them again in the number of their gods. See Tertullian's *Apol.* and his first book *Ad Nationes*, and *Arnobius*, lib. 2.—Davis.

¹⁸⁵ In some copies *Circe*, *Pasiphae*, and *Æa* are mentioned together; but *Æa* is rejected by the most judicious editors.

¹⁸⁶ They were three, and are said to have averted a plague by offering themselves a sacrifice.

who insisted that Alabandus was a God, but that Hercules was not; “Very well,” says he, “then let the anger of Alabandus fall upon me, and that of Hercules upon you.”

XX. Do you not consider, Balbus, to what lengths your arguments for the divinity of the heaven and the stars will carry you? You deify the sun and the moon, which the Greeks take to be Apollo and Diana. If the moon is a Deity, the morning-star, the other planets, and all the fixed stars are also Deities; and why shall not the rainbow be placed in that number? for it is so wonderfully beautiful that it is justly said to be the daughter of Thaumas.¹⁸⁷ But if you deify the rainbow, what regard will you pay to the clouds? for the colors which appear in the bow are only formed of the clouds, one of which is said to have brought forth the Centaurs; and if you deify the clouds, you cannot pay less regard to the seasons, which the Roman people have really consecrated. Tempests, showers, storms, and whirlwinds must then be Deities. It is certain, at least, that our captains used to sacrifice a victim to the waves before they embarked on any voyage.

As you deify the earth under the name of Ceres,¹⁸⁸ because, as you said, she bears fruits (*a gerendo*), and the ocean under that of Neptune, rivers and fountains have the same right. Thus we see that Maso, the conqueror of Corsica, dedicated a temple to a fountain, and the names of the Tiber, Spino, Almo, Nodinus, and other neighboring rivers are in the prayers¹⁸⁹ of the augurs. Therefore, either the number of such Deities will be infinite, or we must admit none of them, and wholly disapprove of such an endless series of superstition.

XXI. None of all these assertions, then, are to be admitted. I must proceed now, Balbus, to answer those who say that, with regard to those deified mortals, so religiously and devoutly revered, the public opinion should have the force of reality. To begin, then: they who are called theologists say that there are three Jupiters; the first and second of whom were born in Arcadia; one of whom was the son of Æther, and father of Proserpine and Bacchus; the other the son of Cœlus, and father of Minerva, who is called the Goddess and inventress of war; the third one born of Saturn in the isle of Crete,¹⁹⁰ where his sepulchre is shown. The sons of Jupiter (Διόσκουροι) also, among the Greeks, have many names; first, the three who at Athens have the title of Anactes,¹⁹¹ Tritopatreus, Eubuleus, and Dionysus, sons of the most ancient king Jupiter and Proserpine; the next are Castor and Pollux, sons of the third Jupiter and Leda; and, lastly, three others, by some called Alco,¹⁹² Melampus, and Tmolus, sons of Atreus, the son of Pelops.

As to the Muses, there were at first four—Thelxiope, Aœde, Arche, and Melete—daughters of the second Jupiter; afterward there were nine, daughters of the third Jupiter and Mnemosyne; there were also nine others, having the same appellations, born of Pierus and Antiopa, by the poets usually called Pierides and Pieriæ.

Though *Sol* (the sun) is so called, you say, because he is *solus* (single); yet how many suns do theologists mention? There is one, the son of Jupiter and grandson of Æther;

¹⁸⁷ So called from the Greek word θαυμάζω, to wonder.

¹⁸⁸ She was first called Geres, from *gero*, to bear.

¹⁸⁹ The word is *precatione*, which means the books or forms of prayers used by the augurs.

¹⁹⁰ Cotta's intent here, as well as in other places, is to show how unphilosophical their civil theology was, and with what confusions it was embarrassed; which design of the Academic the reader should carefully keep in view, or he will lose the chain of argument.

¹⁹¹ Anactes, Ἀνακτες, was a general name for all kings, as we find in the oldest Greek writers, and particularly in Homer.

¹⁹² The common reading is Aleo; but we follow Lambinus and Davis, who had the authority of the best manuscript copies.

another, the son of Hyperion; a third, who, the Egyptians say, was of the city Heliopolis, sprung from Vulcan, the son of Nilus; a fourth is said to have been born at Rhodes of Acantho, in the times of the heroes, and was the grandfather of Jalysus, Camirus, and Lindus; a fifth, of whom, it is pretended, Aretes and Circe were born at Colchis.

XXII. There are likewise several Vulcans. The first (who had of Minerva that Apollo whom the ancient historians call the tutelary God of Athens) was the son of Coelus; the second, whom the Egyptians call Opas,¹⁹³ and whom they looked upon as the protector of Egypt, is the son of Nilus; the third, who is said to have been the master of the forges at Lemnos, was the son of the third Jupiter and of Juno; the fourth, who possessed the islands near Sicily called Vulcaniæ,¹⁹⁴ was the son of Menalius. One Mercury had Coelus for his father and Dies for his mother; another, who is said to dwell in a cavern, and is the same as Trophonius, is the son of Valens and Phoronis. A third, of whom, and of Penelope, Pan was the offspring, is the son of the third Jupiter and Maia. A fourth, whom the Egyptians think it a crime to name, is the son of Nilus. A fifth, whom we call, in their language, Thoth, as with them the first month of the year is called, is he whom the people of Pheneum¹⁹⁵ worship, and who is said to have killed Argus, to have fled for it into Egypt, and to have given laws and learning to the Egyptians. The first of the Æsculapii, the God of Arcadia, who is said to have invented the probe and to have been the first person who taught men to use bandages for wounds, is the son of Apollo. The second, who was killed with thunder, and is said to be buried in Cynosura,¹⁹⁶ is the brother of the second Mercury. The third, who is said to have found out the art of purging the stomach, and of drawing teeth, is the son of Arsippus and Arsinoe; and in Arcadia there is shown his tomb, and the wood which is consecrated to him, near the river Lusium.

XXIII. I have already spoken of the most ancient of the Apollos, who is the son of Vulcan, and tutelar God of Athens. There is another, son of Corybas, and native of Crete, for which island he is said to have contended with Jupiter himself. A third, who came from the regions of the Hyperborei¹⁹⁷ to Delphi, is the son of the third Jupiter and of Latona. A fourth was of Arcadia, whom the Arcadians called Nomio,¹⁹⁸ because they regarded him as their legislator. There are likewise many Dianas. The first, who is thought to be the mother of the winged Cupid, is the daughter of Jupiter and Proserpine. The second, who is more known, is daughter of the third Jupiter and of Latona. The third, whom the Greeks often call by her father's name, is the daughter of Upis¹⁹⁹ and Glauce. There are many also of the Dionysi. The first was the son of Jupiter and Proserpine. The second, who is said to have killed Nysa, was the son of Nilus. The third, who reigned in Asia, and for whom the Sabazia²⁰⁰ were instituted, was the son of Caprius. The fourth, for whom they celebrate the Orphic festivals, sprung from Jupiter and Luna. The fifth, who is supposed to have instituted the Trieterides, was the son of Nysus and Thyone.

The first Venus, who has a temple at Elis, was the daughter of Coelus and Dies. The second arose out of the froth of the sea, and became, by Mercury, the mother of the

¹⁹³ Some prefer Phthas to Opas (see Dr. Davis's edition); but Opas is the generally received reading.

¹⁹⁴ The Lipari Isles.

¹⁹⁵ A town in Arcadia.

¹⁹⁶ In Arcadia.

¹⁹⁷ A northern people.

¹⁹⁸ So called from the Greek word νόμος, *lex*, a law.

¹⁹⁹ He is called Ὀπίς in some old Greek fragments, and Οὐπίς by Callimachus in his hymn on Diana.

²⁰⁰ Σαβάζιος, Sabazius, is one of the names used for Bacchus.

second Cupid. The third, the daughter of Jupiter and Diana, was married to Vulcan, but is said to have had Anteros by Mars. The fourth was a Syrian, born of Tyro, who is called Astarte, and is said to have been married to Adonis. I have already mentioned one Minerva, mother of Apollo. Another, who is worshipped at Sais, a city in Egypt, sprung from Nilus. The third, whom I have also mentioned, was daughter of Jupiter. The fourth, sprung from Jupiter and Coryphe, the daughter of the Ocean; the Arcadians call her Coria, and make her the inventress of chariots. A fifth, whom they paint with wings at her heels, was daughter of Pallas, and is said to have killed her father for endeavoring to violate her chastity. The first Cupid is said to be the son of Mercury and the first Diana; the second, of Mercury and the second Venus; the third, who is the same as Anteros, of Mars and the third Venus.

All these opinions arise from old stories that were spread in Greece; the belief in which, Balbus, you well know, ought to be stopped, lest religion should suffer. But you Stoics, so far from refuting them, even give them authority by the mysterious sense which you pretend to find in them. Can you, then, think, after this plain refutation, that there is need to employ more subtle reasonings? But to return from this digression.

XXIV. We see that the mind, faith, hope, virtue, honor, victory, health, concord, and things of such kind, are purely natural, and have nothing of divinity in them; for either they are inherent in us, as the mind, faith, hope, virtue, and concord are; or else they are to be desired, as honor, health, and victory. I know indeed that they are useful to us, and see that statues have been religiously erected for them; but as to their divinity, I shall begin to believe it when you have proved it for certain. Of this kind I may particularly mention Fortune, which is allowed to be ever inseparable from inconstancy and temerity, which are certainly qualities unworthy of a divine being.

But what delight do you take in the explication of fables, and in the etymology of names?—that Coelus was castrated by his son, and that Saturn was bound in chains by his son! By your defence of these and such like fictions you would make the authors of them appear not only not to be madmen, but to have been even very wise. But the pains which you take with your etymologies deserve our pity. That Saturn is so called because *se saturat annis*, he is full of years; Mavors, Mars, because *magna vortit*, he brings about mighty changes; Minerva, because *minuit*, she diminishes, or because *minatur*, she threatens; Venus, because *venit ad omnia*, she comes to all; Ceres, *a gerendo*, from bearing. How dangerous is this method! for there are many names would puzzle you. From what would you derive Vejupiter and Vulcan? Though, indeed, if you can derive Neptune *a nando*, from swimming, in which you seem to me to flounder about yourself more than Neptune, you may easily find the origin of all names, since it is founded only upon the conformity of some one letter. Zeno first, and after him Cleanthes and Chrysippus, are put to the unnecessary trouble of explaining mere fables, and giving reasons for the several appellations of every Deity; which is really owning that those whom we call Gods are not the representations of deities, but natural things, and that to judge otherwise is an error.

XXV. Yet this error has so much prevailed that even pernicious things have not only the title of divinity ascribed to them, but have also sacrifices offered to them; for Fever has a temple on the Palatine hill, and Orbona another near that of the Lares, and we see on the Esquiline hill an altar consecrated to Ill-fortune. Let all such errors be banished from philosophy, if we would advance, in our dispute concerning the immortal Gods, nothing unworthy of immortal beings. I know myself what I ought to

believe; which is far different from what you have said. You take Neptune for an intelligence pervading the sea. You have the same opinion of Ceres with regard to the earth. I cannot, I own, find out, or in the least conjecture, what that intelligence of the sea or the earth is. To learn, therefore, the existence of the Gods, and of what description and character they are, I must apply elsewhere, not to the Stoics.

Let us proceed to the two other parts of our dispute: first, “whether there is a divine providence which governs the world;” and lastly, “whether that providence particularly regards mankind;” for these are the remaining propositions of your discourse; and I think that, if you approve of it, we should examine these more accurately. With all my heart, says Velleius, for I readily agree to what you have hitherto said, and expect still greater things from you.

I am unwilling to interrupt you, says Balbus to Cotta, but we shall take another opportunity, and I shall effectually convince you. But²⁰¹ * * *

XXVI.

Shall I adore, and bend the suppliant knee,
Who scorn their power and doubt their deity?

Does not Niobe here seem to reason, and by that reasoning to bring all her misfortunes upon herself? But what a subtle expression is the following!

On strength of will alone depends success;
a maxim capable of leading us into all that is bad.

Though I’m confined, his malice yet is vain,
His tortured heart shall answer pain for pain;
His ruin soothe my soul with soft content,
Lighten my chains, and welcome banishment!

This, now, is reason; that reason which you say the divine goodness has denied to the brute creation, kindly to bestow it on men alone. How great, how immense the favor! Observe the same Medea flying from her father and her country:

The guilty wretch from her pursuer flies.
By her own hands the young Absyrtus slain,
His mangled limbs she scatters o’er the plain,
That the fond sire might sink beneath his woe,
And she to parricide her safety owe.

Reflection, as well as wickedness, must have been necessary to the preparation of such a fact; and did he too, who prepared that fatal repast for his brother, do it without reflection?

Revenge as great as Atreus’ injury
Shall sink his soul and crown his misery.

XXVII. Did not Thyestes himself, not content with having defiled his brother’s bed (of which Atreus with great justice thus complains,

When faithless comforts, in the lewd embrace,
With vile adultery stain a royal race,

²⁰¹ Here is a wide chasm in the original. What is lost probably may have contained great part of Cotta’s arguments against the providence of the Stoics.

The blood thus mix'd in fouler currents flows,
Taints the rich soil, and breeds unnumber'd woes)—

did he not, I say, by that adultery, aim at the possession of the crown? Atreus thus continues:

A lamb, fair gift of heaven, with golden fleece,
Promised in vain to fix my crown in peace;
But base Thyestes, eager for the prey,
Crept to my bed, and stole the gem away.

Do you not perceive that Thyestes must have had a share of reason proportionable to the greatness of his crimes—such crimes as are not only represented to us on the stage, but such as we see committed, nay, often exceeded, in the common course of life? The private houses of individual citizens, the public courts, the senate, the camp, our allies, our provinces, all agree that reason is the author of all the ill, as well as of all the good, which is done; that it makes few act well, and that but seldom, but many act ill, and that frequently; and that, in short, the Gods would have shown greater benevolence in denying us any reason at all than in sending us that which is accompanied with so much mischief; for as wine is seldom wholesome, but often hurtful in diseases, we think it more prudent to deny it to the patient than to run the risk of so uncertain a remedy; so I do not know whether it would not be better for mankind to be deprived of wit, thought, and penetration, or what we call reason, since it is a thing pernicious to many and very useful to few, than to have it bestowed upon them with so much liberality and in such abundance. But if the divine will has really consulted the good of man in this gift of reason, the good of those men only was consulted on whom a well-regulated one is bestowed: how few those are, if any, is very apparent. We cannot admit, therefore, that the Gods consulted the good of a few only; the conclusion must be that they consulted the good of none.

XXVIII. You answer that the ill use which a great part of mankind make of reason no more takes away the goodness of the Gods, who bestow it as a present of the greatest benefit to them, than the ill use which children make of their patrimony diminishes the obligation which they have to their parents for it. We grant you this; but where is the similitude? It was far from Deianira's design to injure Hercules when she made him a present of the shirt dipped in the blood of the Centaurs. Nor was it a regard to the welfare of Jason of Pheræ that influenced the man who with his sword opened his imposthume, which the physicians had in vain attempted to cure. For it has often happened that people have served a man whom they intended to injure, and have injured one whom they designed to serve; so that the effect of the gift is by no means always a proof of the intention of the giver; neither does the benefit which may accrue from it prove that it came from the hands of a benefactor. For, in short, what debauchery, what avarice, what crime among men is there which does not owe its birth to thought and reflection, that is, to reason? For all opinion is reason: right reason, if men's thoughts are conformable to truth; wrong reason, if they are not. The Gods only give us the mere faculty of reason, if we have any; the use or abuse of it depends entirely upon ourselves; so that the comparison is not just between the present of reason given us by the Gods, and a patrimony left to a son by his father; for, after all, if the injury of mankind had been the end proposed by the Gods, what could they have given them more pernicious than reason? for what seed could there be of injustice, intemperance, and cowardice, if reason were not laid as the foundation of these vices?

XXIX. I mentioned just now Medea and Atreus, persons celebrated in heroic poems, who had used this reason only for the contrivance and practice of the most flagitious crimes; but even the trifling characters which appear in comedies supply us with the like instances of this reasoning faculty; for example, does not he, in the Eunuch, reason with some subtlety?—

What, then, must I resolve upon?
She turn'd me out-of-doors; she sends for me back again;
Shall I go? no, not if she were to beg it of me.

Another, in the Twins, making no scruple of opposing a received maxim, after the manner of the Academics, asserts that when a man is in love and in want, it is pleasant

To have a father covetous, crabbed, and passionate,
Who has no love or affection for his children.

This unaccountable opinion he strengthens thus:

You may defraud him of his profits, or forge letters in his name,
Or fright him by your servant into compliance;
And what you take from such an old hunk,
How much more pleasantly do you spend it!

On the contrary, he says that an easy, generous father is an inconvenience to a son in love; for, says he,

I can't tell how to abuse so good, so prudent a parent,
Who always foreruns my desires, and meets me purse in hand,
To support me in my pleasures: this easy goodness and generosity
Quite defeat all my frauds, tricks, and stratagems.²⁰²

What are these frauds, tricks, and stratagems but the effects of reason? O excellent gift of the Gods! Without this Phormio could not have said,

Find me out the old man: I have something hatching for him in my head.

XXX. But let us pass from the stage to the bar. The praetor²⁰³ takes his seat. To judge whom? The man who set fire to our archives. How secretly was that villany conducted! Q. Sosius, an illustrious Roman knight, of the Picene field,²⁰⁴ confessed the fact. Who else is to be tried? He who forged the public registers—Alenus, an artful fellow, who counterfeited the handwriting of the six officers.²⁰⁵ Let us call to mind other trials: that on the subject of the gold of Tolosa, or the conspiracy of Jugurtha. Let us trace back the informations laid against Tubulus for bribery in his judicial office; and, since that, the proceedings of the tribune Peduceus concerning the incest of the vestals. Let us reflect upon the trials which daily happen for assassinations, poisonings, embezzlement of public money, frauds in wills, against which we have a

²⁰² Here is one expression in the quotation from Cæcilius that is not commonly met with, which is *præstigias præstrinxit*; Lambinus gives *præstinxit*, for the sake, I suppose, of playing on words, because it might then be translated, "He has deluded my delusions, or stratagems;" but *præstrinxit* is certainly the right reading.

²⁰³ The ancient Romans had a judicial as well as a military praetor; and he sat, with inferior judges attending him, like one of our chief-justices. *Sessum it praetor*, which I doubt not is the right reading, Lambinus restored from an old copy. The common reading was *sessum ite precor*.

²⁰⁴ Picenum was a region of Italy.

²⁰⁵ The *sex primi* were general receivers of all taxes and tributes; and they were obliged to make good, out of their own fortunes, whatever deficiencies were in the public treasury.

new law; then that action against the advisers or assisters of any theft; the many laws concerning frauds in guardianship, breaches of trust in partnerships and commissions in trade, and other violations of faith in buying, selling, borrowing, or lending; the public decree on a private affair by the Lætorian Law;²⁰⁶ and, lastly, that scourge of all dishonesty, the law against fraud, proposed by our friend Aquillius; that sort of fraud, he says, by which one thing is pretended and another done. Can we, then, think that this plentiful fountain of evil sprung from the immortal Gods? If they have given reason to man, they have likewise given him subtlety, for subtlety is only a deceitful manner of applying reason to do mischief. To them likewise we must owe deceit, and every other crime, which, without the help of reason, would neither have been thought of nor committed. As the old woman wished

That to the fir which on Mount Pelion grew
The axe had ne'er been laid,²⁰⁷

so we should wish that the Gods had never bestowed this ability on man, the abuse of which is so general that the small number of those who make a good use of it are often oppressed by those who make a bad use of it; so that it seems to be given rather to help vice than to promote virtue among us.

XXXI. This, you insist on it, is the fault of man, and not of the Gods. But should we not laugh at a physician or pilot, though they are weak mortals, if they were to lay the blame of their ill success on the violence of the disease or the fury of the tempest? Had there not been danger, we should say, who would have applied to you? This reasoning has still greater force against the Deity. The fault, you say, is in man, if he commits crimes. But why was not man endued with a reason incapable of producing any crimes? How could the Gods err? When we leave our effects to our children, it is in hopes that they may be well bestowed; in which we may be deceived, but how can the Deity be deceived? As Phœbus when he trusted his chariot to his son Phaëthon, or as Neptune when he indulged his son Theseus in granting him three wishes, the consequence of which was the destruction of Hippolitus? These are poetical fictions; but truth, and not fables, ought to proceed from philosophers. Yet if those poetical Deities had foreseen that their indulgence would have proved fatal to their sons, they must have been thought blamable for it.

Aristo of Chios used often to say that the philosophers do hurt to such of their disciples as take their good doctrine in a wrong sense; thus the lectures of Aristippus might produce debauchees, and those of Zeno pedants. If this be true, it were better that philosophers should be silent than that their disciples should be corrupted by a misapprehension of their master's meaning; so if reason, which was bestowed on mankind by the Gods with a good design, tends only to make men more subtle and fraudulent, it had been better for them never to have received it. There could be no excuse for a physician who prescribes wine to a patient, knowing that he will drink it and immediately expire. Your Providence is no less blamable in giving reason to man, who, it foresaw, would make a bad use of it. Will you say that it did not foresee

²⁰⁶ The Lætorian Law was a security for those under age against extortioners, etc. By this law all debts contracted under twenty-five years of age were void.

²⁰⁷ This is from Ennius—

Utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus
Cæsa cecidisset abiegna ad terram trabes.

Translated from the beginning of the *Medea* of Euripides—

Μήδ' ἐν νάπαισι Πηλίων πεσεῖν ποτε
τμηθεῖσα πεύκη.

it? Nothing could please me more than such an acknowledgment. But you dare not. I know what a sublime idea you entertain of her.

XXXII. But to conclude. If folly, by the unanimous consent of philosophers, is allowed to be the greatest of all evils, and if no one ever attained to true wisdom, we, whom they say the immortal Gods take care of, are consequently in a state of the utmost misery. For that nobody is well, or that nobody can be well, is in effect the same thing; and, in my opinion, that no man is truly wise, or that no man can be truly wise, is likewise the same thing. But I will insist no further on so self-evident a point. Telamon in one verse decides the question. If, says he, there is a Divine Providence,

Good men would be happy, bad men miserable.

But it is not so. If the Gods had regarded mankind, they should have made them all virtuous; but if they did not regard the welfare of all mankind, at least they ought to have provided for the happiness of the virtuous. Why, therefore, was the Carthaginian in Spain suffered to destroy those best and bravest men, the two Scipios? Why did Maximus²⁰⁸ lose his son, the consul? Why did Hannibal kill Marcellus? Why did Cannæ deprive us of Paulus? Why was the body of Regulus delivered up to the cruelty of the Carthaginians? Why was not Africanus protected from violence in his own house? To these, and many more ancient instances, let us add some of later date. Why is Rutilius, my uncle, a man of the greatest virtue and learning, now in banishment? Why was my own friend and companion Drusus assassinated in his own house? Why was Scævola, the high-priest, that pattern of moderation and prudence, massacred before the statue of Vesta? Why, before that, were so many illustrious citizens put to death by Cinna? Why had Marius, the most perfidious of men, the power to cause the death of Catulus, a man of the greatest dignity? But there would be no end of enumerating examples of good men made miserable and wicked men prosperous. Why did that Marius live to an old age, and die so happily at his own house in his seventh consulship? Why was that inhuman wretch Cinna permitted to enjoy so long a reign?

XXXIII. He, indeed, met with deserved punishment at last. But would it not have been better that these inhumanities had been prevented than that the author of them should be punished afterward? Varius, a most impious wretch, was tortured and put to death. If this was his punishment for the murdering Drusus by the sword, and Metellus by poison, would it not have been better to have preserved their lives than to have their deaths avenged on Varius? Dionysius was thirty-eight years a tyrant over the most opulent and flourishing city; and, before him, how many years did Pisistratus tyrannize in the very flower of Greece! Phalaris and Apollodorus met with the fate they deserved, but not till after they had tortured and put to death multitudes. Many robbers have been executed; but the number of those who have suffered for their crimes is short of those whom they have robbed and murdered. Anaxarchus,²⁰⁹ a scholar of Democritus, was cut to pieces by command of the tyrant of Cyprus; and Zeno of Elea²¹⁰ ended his life in tortures. What shall I say of

²⁰⁸ Q. Fabius Maximus, surnamed Cunctator.

²⁰⁹ Diogenes Laertius says he was pounded to death in a stone mortar by command of Nicocreon, tyrant of Cyprus.

²¹⁰ Elea, a city of Lucania, in Italy. The manner in which Zeno was put to death is, according to Diogenes Laertius, uncertain.

Socrates,²¹¹ whose death, as often as I read of it in Plato, draws fresh tears from my eyes? If, therefore, the Gods really see everything that happens to men, you must acknowledge they make no distinction between the good and the bad.

XXXIV. Diogenes the Cynic used to say of Harpalus, one of the most fortunate villains of his time, that the constant prosperity of such a man was a kind of witness against the Gods. Dionysius, of whom we have before spoken, after he had pillaged the temple of Proserpine at Locris, set sail for Syracuse, and, having a fair wind during his voyage, said, with a smile, "See, my friends, what favorable winds the immortal Gods bestow upon church-robbers." Encouraged by this prosperous event, he proceeded in his impiety. When he landed at Peloponnesus, he went into the temple of Jupiter Olympius, and disrobed his statue of a golden mantle of great weight, an ornament which the tyrant Gelo²¹² had given out of the spoils of the Carthaginians, and at the same time, in a jesting manner, he said "that a golden mantle was too heavy in summer and too cold in winter;" and then, throwing a woollen cloak over the statue, added, "This will serve for all seasons." At another time, he ordered the golden beard of Æsculapius of Epidaurus to be taken away, saying that "it was absurd for the son to have a beard, when his father had none." He likewise robbed the temples of the silver tables, which, according to the ancient custom of Greece, bore this inscription, "To the good Gods," saying "he was willing to make use of their goodness;" and, without the least scruple, took away the little golden emblems of victory, the cups and coronets, which were in the stretched-out hands of the statues, saying "he did not take, but receive them; for it would be folly not to accept good things from the Gods, to whom we are constantly praying for favors, when they stretch out their hands towards us." And, last of all, all the things which he had thus pillaged from the temples were, by his order, brought to the market-place and sold by the common crier; and, after he had received the money for them, he commanded every purchaser to restore what he had bought, within a limited time, to the temples from whence they came. Thus to his impiety towards the Gods he added injustice to man.

XXXV. Yet neither did Olympian Jove strike him with his thunder, nor did Æsculapius cause him to die by tedious diseases and a lingering death. He died in his bed, had funeral honors²¹³ paid to him, and left his power, which he had wickedly obtained, as a just and lawful inheritance to his son.

It is not without concern that I maintain a doctrine which seems to authorize evil, and which might probably give a sanction to it, if conscience, without any divine assistance, did not point out, in the clearest manner, the difference between virtue and vice. Without conscience man is contemptible. For as no family or state can be supposed to be formed with any reason or discipline if there are no rewards for good actions nor punishment for crimes, so we cannot believe that a Divine Providence regulates the world if there is no distinction between the honest and the wicked.

²¹¹ This great and good man was accused of destroying the divinity of the Gods of his country. He was condemned, and died by drinking a glass of poison.

²¹² Tyrant of Sicily.

²¹³ The common reading is, *in tympanidis rogum inlatus est*. This passage has been the occasion of as many different opinions concerning both the reading and the sense as any passage in the whole treatise. *Tympanum* is used for a timbrel or drum, *tympanidia* a diminutive of it. Lambinus says *tympana* "were sticks with which the tyrant used to beat the condemned." P. Victorius substitutes *tyrannidis* for *tympanidis*.

But the Gods, you say, neglect trifling things: the little fields or vineyards of particular men are not worthy their attention; and if blasts or hail destroy their product, Jupiter does not regard it, nor do kings extend their care to the lower offices of government. This argument might have some weight if, in bringing Rutilius as an instance, I had only complained of the loss of his farm at Formiæ; but I spoke of a personal misfortune, his banishment.²¹⁴

XXXVI. All men agree that external benefits, such as vineyards, corn, olives, plenty of fruit and grain, and, in short, every convenience and property of life, are derived from the Gods; and, indeed, with reason, since by our virtue we claim applause, and in virtue we justly glory, which we could have no right to do if it was the gift of the Gods, and not a personal merit. When we are honored with new dignities, or blessed with increase of riches; when we are favored by fortune beyond our expectation, or luckily delivered from any approaching evil, we return thanks for it to the Gods, and assume no praise to ourselves. But who ever thanked the Gods that he was a good man? We thank them, indeed, for riches, health, and honor. For these we invoke the all-good and all-powerful Jupiter; but not for wisdom, temperance, and justice. No one ever offered a tenth of his estate to Hercules to be made wise. It is reported, indeed, of Pythagoras that he sacrificed an ox to the Muses upon having made some new discovery in geometry;²¹⁵ but, for my part, I cannot believe it, because he refused to sacrifice even to Apollo at Delos, lest he should defile the altar with blood. But to return. It is universally agreed that good fortune we must ask of the Gods, but wisdom must arise from ourselves; and though temples have been consecrated to the Mind, to Virtue, and to Faith, yet that does not contradict their being inherent in us. In regard to hope, safety, assistance, and victory, we must rely upon the Gods for them; from whence it follows, as Diogenes said, that the prosperity of the wicked destroys the idea of a Divine Providence.

XXXVII. But good men have sometimes success. They have so; but we cannot, with any show of reason, attribute that success to the Gods. Diagoras, who is called the atheist, being at Samothrace, one of his friends showed him several pictures²¹⁶ of people who had endured very dangerous storms; "See," says he, "you who deny a providence, how many have been saved by their prayers to the Gods." "Ay," says Diagoras, "I see those who were saved, but where are those painted who were shipwrecked?" At another time, he himself was in a storm, when the sailors, being greatly alarmed, told him they justly deserved that misfortune for admitting him into their ship; when he, pointing to others under the like distress, asked them "if they believed Diagoras was also aboard those ships?" In short, with regard to good or bad fortune, it matters not what you are, or how you have lived. The Gods, like kings, regard not everything. What similitude is there between them? If kings neglect anything, want of knowledge may be pleaded in their defence; but ignorance cannot be brought as an excuse for the Gods.

XXXVIII. Your manner of justifying them is somewhat extraordinary, when you say that if a wicked man dies without suffering for his crimes, the Gods inflict a

²¹⁴ The original is *de amissa salute*; which means the sentence of banishment among the Romans, in which was contained the loss of goods and estate, and the privileges of a Roman; and in this sense L'Abbé d'Olivet translates it.

²¹⁵ The forty-seventh proposition of the first book of Euclid is unanimously ascribed to him by the ancients. Dr. Wotton, in his *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, says, "It is indeed a very noble proposition, the foundation of trigonometry, of universal and various use in those curious speculations about incommensurable numbers."

²¹⁶ These votive tables, or pictures, were hung up in the temples.

punishment on his children, his children's children, and all his posterity. O wonderful equity of the Gods! What city would endure the maker of a law which should condemn a son or a grandson for a crime committed by the father or the grandfather?

Shall Tantalus' unhappy offspring know
No end, no close, of this long scene of woe?
When will the dire reward of guilt be o'er,
And Myrtilus demand revenge no more?²¹⁷

Whether the poets have corrupted the Stoics, or the Stoics given authority to the poets, I cannot easily determine. Both alike are to be condemned. If those persons whose names have been branded in the satires of Hipponax or Archilochus²¹⁸ were driven to despair, it did not proceed from the Gods, but had its origin in their own minds. When we see Ægistus and Paris lost in the heat of an impure passion, why are we to attribute it to a Deity, when the crime, as it were, speaks for itself? I believe that those who recover from illness are more indebted to the care of Hippocrates than to the power of Æsculapius; that Sparta received her laws from Lycurgus²¹⁹ rather than from Apollo; that those eyes of the maritime coast, Corinth and Carthage, were plucked out, the one by Critolaus, the other by Hasdrubal, without the assistance of any divine anger, since you yourselves confess that a Deity cannot possibly be angry on any provocation.

XXXIX. But could not the Deity have assisted and preserved those eminent cities? Undoubtedly he could; for, according to your doctrine, his power is infinite, and without the least labor; and as nothing but the will is necessary to the motion of our bodies, so the divine will of the Gods, with the like ease, can create, move, and change all things. This you hold, not from a mere phantom of superstition, but on natural and settled principles of reason; for matter, you say, of which all things are composed and consist, is susceptible of all forms and changes, and there is nothing which cannot be, or cease to be, in an instant; and that Divine Providence has the command and disposal of this universal matter, and consequently can, in any part of the universe, do whatever she pleases: from whence I conclude that this Providence either knows not the extent of her power, or neglects human affairs, or cannot judge what is best for us. Providence, you say, does not extend her care to particular men; there is no wonder in that, since she does not extend it to cities, or even to nations, or people. If, therefore, she neglects whole nations, is it not very probable that she neglects all mankind? But how can you assert that the Gods do not enter into all the little circumstances of life, and yet hold that they distribute dreams among men? Since you believe in dreams, it is your part to solve this difficulty. Besides, you say we ought to call upon the Gods. Those who call upon the Gods are individuals. Divine Providence, therefore, regards individuals, which consequently proves that they are more at leisure than you imagine. Let us suppose the Divine Providence to be greatly busied; that it causes the revolutions of the heavens, supports the earth, and rules the

²¹⁷ This passage is a fragment from a tragedy of Attius.

²¹⁸ Hipponax was a poet at Ephesus, and so deformed that Bupalus drew a picture of him to provoke laughter; for which Hipponax is said to have written such keen iambics on the painter that he hanged himself.

Lycambes had promised Archilochus the poet to marry his daughter to him, but afterward retracted his promise, and refused her; upon which Archilochus is said to have published a satire in iambic verse that provoked him to hang himself.

²¹⁹ Cicero refers here to an oracle approving of his laws, and promising Sparta prosperity as long as they were obeyed, which Lycurgus procured from Delphi.

seas; why does it suffer so many Gods to be unemployed? Why is not the superintendence of human affairs given to some of those idle Deities which you say are innumerable?

This is the purport of what I had to say concerning “the Nature of the Gods;” not with a design to destroy their existence, but merely to show what an obscure point it is, and with what difficulties an explanation of it is attended.

XL. Balbus, observing that Cotta had finished his discourse—You have been very severe, says he, against a Divine Providence, a doctrine established by the Stoics with piety and wisdom; but, as it grows too late, I shall defer my answer to another day. Our argument is of the greatest importance; it concerns our altars,²²⁰ our hearths, our temples, nay, even the walls of our city, which you priests hold sacred; you, who by religion defend Rome better than she is defended by her ramparts. This is a cause which, while I have life, I think I cannot abandon without impiety.

There is nothing, replied Cotta, which I desire more than to be confuted. I have not pretended to decide this point, but to give you my private sentiments upon it; and am very sensible of your great superiority in argument. No doubt of it, says Velleius; we have much to fear from one who believes that our dreams are sent from Jupiter, which, though they are of little weight, are yet of more importance than the discourse of the Stoics concerning the nature of the Gods. The conversation ended here, and we parted. Velleius judged that the arguments of Cotta were truest; but those of Balbus seemed to me to have the greater probability.²²¹

THE END

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²²⁰ *Pro aris et focis* is a proverbial expression. The Romans, when they would say their all was at stake, could not express it stronger than by saying they contended *pro aris et focis*, for religion and their firesides, or, as we express it, for religion and property.

²²¹ Cicero, who was an Academic, gives his opinion according to the manner of the Academics, who looked upon probability, and a resemblance of truth, as the utmost they could arrive at.