

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 please,¹ do 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.

¹ As the Academics doubted everything, it was indifferent to them which side of a question they took.

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 interpreters¹ 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, an-

¹ The keepers and interpreters of the Sibylline oracles were the *Quindecimviri*.

swers 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—

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 Jove,¹ 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.

¹ The popular name of Jupiter in Rome, being looked upon as defender of the Capitol (in which he was placed), and stay of the State.

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 you.¹ * * *

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 com-

¹ Some passages of the original are here wanting. Cotta continues speaking against the doctrine of the Stoics.

fort, 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?¹ 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 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,² 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 fore-

¹ The word *sortes* is often used for the answers of the oracles, or, rather, for the rolls in which the answers were written.

² 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.

knowledge 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*

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