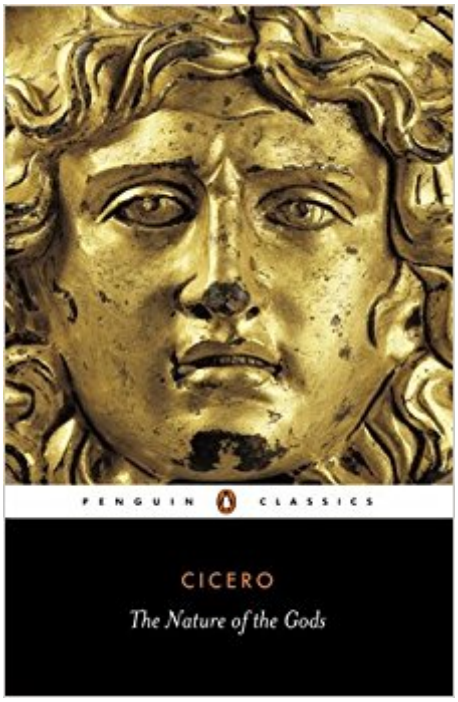
Ebook Directory
the best source of ebook

The book was found

The Nature Of The Gods (Penguin Classics)



PDF
Adobe
DOWNLOAD EBOOK

Synopsis

Towards the end of his life, Cicero turned away from his oratorical and political career and looked instead to matters of philosophy and religion. The dialogue The Nature of the Gods both explores his own views on these subjects, as a monotheist and member of the Academic School, and considers the opinion of other philosophical schools of the Hellenistic age through the figures of Velleius the Epicurean and Balbus the Stoic. Eloquent, clearly argued and surprisingly modern, it focuses upon a series of fundamental religious questions including: is there a God? If so, does he answer prayers, or intervene in human affairs? Does he know the future? Does morality need the support of religion? Profoundly influential on later thinkers, such as Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, this is a fascinating consideration of fundamental issues of faith and philosophical thought.For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

Book Information

Series: Penguin Classics

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Penguin Classics; Reissue edition (October 30, 1972)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140442650

ISBN-13: 978-0140442656

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.7 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.1 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #840,767 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #51 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Theism #1114 inÃ Â Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Ancient & Classical #1316 inÃ Â Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Medieval

Customer Reviews

`The translation is both lively and accurate; the introduction is judicious and informative. The notes are especially strong on the identification of the many historical references in the work.'Phronesis

--This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Latin

If you're like me, you were brought up thinking the ancients understood God(s) in terms of their old polytheistic mythology. In fact quaint village myths didn't make it in the large cities. The idea of a single High God predated Christianity by centuries, and was in fact central to mainstream ancient philosophies / theologies you've probably heard of: Platonism, Stoicism, Epicureanism.For us, religion and revelation are inseparable. Christianity, Islam, Bahai-ism, Mormonism are "revealed" religions, based on the God's direct revelation through his Son or Prophet -- Jesus, Mohamed, Bahaulla, Joseph Smith. The Greeks and Romans didn't have "revealed" religions. They had to work out their ideas of meaning and divinity without a solid, revealed, starting place. In a world without revealed religion, the ancient philosophers tried to figure out, What is God? Amazing.If you're interested in how the ancients understood God, Cicero's book, The Nature of the Gods, is a great read. It's basically a synopsis of ancient philosophies / theologies. It will change your understanding of the history of western religious thought. Listen to Cicero [106 - 43 BC], a non-Christian, describing God: "God dwells in the universe as its ruler and governor, and rules the stars in their courses, and the changing seasons, and all the varying sequences of nature, looking down on earth and sea, and protecting the life and goods of men."And, "The divine power is to be found in a principle of reason which pervades the whole of nature."I particularly like the easy to read translation in this Penguin Classics edition.

I began reading the Stoics to get background on St. Paul's evangelistic sermon in Athens (Acts 17), in which Stoics and Epicureans are among his partners in dialogue, but am finding these folks fascinating in their own right. Cicero and Seneca were in the thick of messy imperial politics, which takes some of the gloss off their otherwise attractive (at least in Seneca's case) maxims and ideals; as with Aristotle, you want to ask, "If education is the key to virtue, how did this wise man teach such a ruthless thug as Nero / Alexander?"The Nature of the Gods was, in any case, great for my study. A Stoic, an Epicurean, and a skeptic who moonlights as a priest (!) meet in a private home to debate the reality and nature of God and the gods. No punchline here -- each disputant takes the time to develope his arguments in detail, in often lively prose. Often the debate about "faith" and "reason," myth and history, design and accident, seems surprisingly contemporary. The book also helped me make sense of Paul's line of argument in Acts, and by implication the success of

Christianity. Thoughtful Romans were looking for a God they could believe in; I can almost imagine that Paul put his brief together after reading Book II, and parts of Book III, of Cicero's work.The tone is civil, cosmopolitan, literate, with frequent quotations from the poets and references to mythology. (Which no one present takes seriously -- except metaphorically.)Some of the skeptical parts of Book III also still bite. Why does God allow the wicked to prosper, and the good to perish? The ancients are still worth reading, not in a condescending way as primitive philosophy and bad science, but appreciated for their insights into fundamental questions, and even for some good guesses about Nature. (Cicero knows earth is much smaller than the sun, and round, for example -- though the Stoics think it round IN PART because sphericity is the ideal shape! Strict diets not being a priority in the ancient world.)

Interesting book! Three public figures and Cicero himself, gather in Cotta's villa around 76 B.C. to discuss the nature of the gods. Gaius Velleius is an Epicurean. Quintus Lucilius Balbus, a Stoic. Gaius Aurelius Cotta, an Academic and pontifex. For a summary of the text see, p. xlvi-xlviii. For a brief review of how this book was received in history, see Introduction, p. ix. The question Cicero raises at the beginning of his work is: "If the gods have neither the power nor the desire to help us, if they have no interest whatever and they pay no attention to our activities, if there is nothing which can percolate from them to affect our human lives, what reason have we for addressing any acts of worship or honors or prayers to the immortal gods?" (p. 4)Academics promoted questioning of established opinions; Skepticism denied the possibility of attaining ultimate knowledge of things but only high probability and suspension of judgment (ÃƒÆ'Ã Â¥ÃƒÆ'Ã Â ÃƒÆ'Ã Â ÃƒÆ'Ã Âª ÃƒÆ'Ã Â§). Cicero was influenced by Carneades, the founder of the Third Academy (though his principle `voluptas cum honestate' was regarded by Cicero to be too close to Epicureanism) and by Antiochus, founder of the Fifth Academy (very open to Stoicism). Cotta, the Academic philosopher, endorses belief in the gods on the basis of traditional religion and patriotic duty. He criticizes the arguments adduced by Stoics and Epicureans as non-conclusive and faulty in logic. Here are a couple of quotes from him: "I should defend the beliefs about the immortal gods which we have inherited from our ancestors, together with our sacrifices, ceremonies and religious observances. I shall indeed defend them, and I have always done so; no words from any person, whether learned or unlearned, will ever budge me from the views which I inherited from our ancestors concerning the worship of the immortal gods." (p. 109); and: "I have gained better instruction on how to worship the immortal gods, guided by pontifical law and ancestral custom, from those miniature sacrificial bowls, bequeathed to us by Numa and

described by Laelius in his little speech which is pure gold, than from the explanations of the Stoics." (p. 122)On his part, Balbus, as a good Stoic, believed in a world-soul and in providence (ÃƒÆ'Ã Â ÃƒÂ ÃƒÂ ÃƒÂ-ÃƒÆ'Ã Â ÃƒÂ©ÃƒÂ¡) governing the world, though not the destiny of individuals. The Stoics' was a very immanentistic world view; they also believed in Fate (ÃƒÆ'Ã Â§ÃƒÂ©ÃƒÂ¬ÃƒÂ¡ÃƒÂ ÃƒÂ¬ÃƒÆ'Ã Å ÃƒÂ-ÃƒÆ'Ã Â§) and in predetermined events. This view of Fate appealed to the Roman passion for future-telling. In Roman society, there were:1) Augurs = College of 10 and then 15 (from 51 BC) priests: they studied birds' flight patterns2) Haruspices = Etruscan priests who studied animals' entrails3) Pontefices = College of 16 priests4) Diviners = they studied Sybilline books

Download to continue reading...

The Nature of the Gods (Penguin Classics) Sekret Machines: Gods: Volume 1 of Gods Man & War (Gods, Man & War) Penguin Classics Homage To Catalonia (Penguin Modern Classics) The Penguin Arthur Miller: Collected Plays (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition) The Penguin Book of the Undead: Fifteen Hundred Years of Supernatural Encounters (Penguin Classics) Georgia Nature Weekends: 52 Adventures in Nature (Nature Weekend Series) Nature and Selected Essays (Penguin Classics) The Nature of Things (Penguin Classics) Magicians of the Gods: Updated and Expanded Edition - Sequel to the International Bestseller Fingerprints of the Gods Magicians of the Gods: The Forgotten Wisdom of Earth's Lost Civilisation Ã¢â ¬â œ the sequel to Fingerprints of the Gods Viking: Viking Mythology: Ancient Myths, Gods and Warriors (Norse Mythology, Greek Mythology, Ancient Civilizations, Greek Gods, Ancient Rome, Viking Myths) Norse Gods: Discover the Gods of Norse Mythology (Odin, Thor, Loki, Freya, Heimdall, Frigg, Baldur, Hel, Idun, Mimir, Sif, Vali & Ve) Norse Mythology: Thor, Odin, Loki, and the Other Gods and Heroes (Norse Mythology, Norse Gods, Norse Myths, Norse Sagas, Norse History) Injustice: Gods Among Us: Year Three (2014-2015) Vol. 2 (Injustice: Gods Among Us (2013-2016)) American Gods: Shadows #1 (Neil Gaiman's American Gods: The Shadows) Injustice: Gods Among Us: Year One - The Complete Collection (Injustice: Gods Among Us (2013-2016)) Hinduism: History and Gods (Ultimate Guide to the Hindu Religion, Gods, Rituals and Beliefs) (Hinduism Beliefs and Practices Book 1) Magicians of the Gods: Sequel to the International Bestseller Fingerprints of the Gods THE ANUNNAKI GUIDEBOOK: The Sumerian gods are the Greek gods Gods: Sekret Machines: Gods, Man & War Series, Book 1

Contact Us

DMCA

Privacy

FAQ & Help