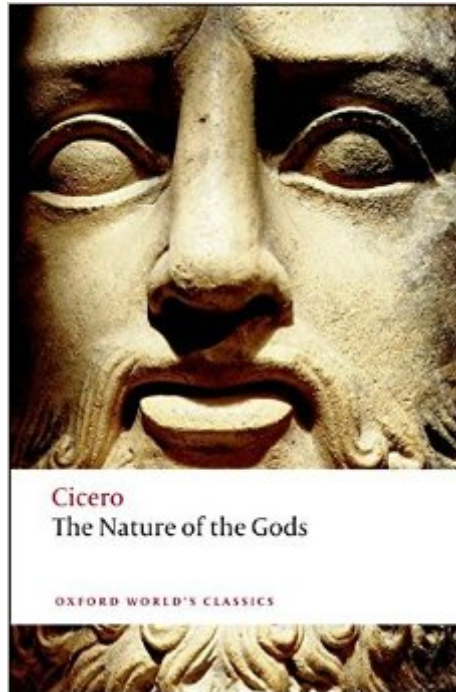


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# The Nature Of The Gods (Oxford World's Classics)



## Synopsis

Cicero's philosophical works are now exciting renewed interest and more generous appreciation, in part because they provide vital evidence of the views of the (largely lost) Greek philosophers of the Hellenistic age, and partly because of the light they cast on the intellectual life of first-century Rome. *The Nature of the Gods* is a central document in this area, for it presents a detailed account of the theologies of the Epicureans and of the Stoics, together with the critical objections to these doctrines raised by the Academic school. About the Series: For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Cicero's "*De Natura Deorum*" is a work the great orator used to present his own position towards philosophy, the gods, and how they work in the universe and in the lives of individuals. Cicero presents his thesis by opening a dialogue between three distinguished philosophers from the major schools of the first century BC: namely the Stoics, Epicureans, and Academics. Velleius, in book one, expounds upon the general tenets of the Epicureans; in book two, Balbus the Stoic in turn attempts to refute the claims made by Velleius; and finally, in book three, Cotta takes the position of the Academics, which should be understood as Cicero's opinions himself. If judged correctly,

Cicero's opinions are quite clear, but they should be left for the reader to discover on his own. As pure philosophy, this book obviously lacks merit; but as for creativity and sheer eloquence Cicero's work will make for an entertaining and insightful read, especially as an introductory to the philosophical maxims during the decay of the Roman Republic. Despite the work's lack of philosophical ingenuity, its influence may possibly be greater than what is customarily maintained, since it is likely that "De Naturae Deorum" impacted Boethius in writing his "Consolation of Philosophy." First of all, both works address many of the same issues, and secondly in their literary style they both use prose and verse to convey meaning. Overall, this work will make for a comforting, and at times insightful read; this will be an essential addition to the classical library.

This is a review of the translation published by Oxford World's Classics. In this work, Cicero tackles the question of theology from the perspective of the schools of thought in Rome in the first century BCE. The theories of the Epicurians, the Academics, and the Stoics are given a lot of space, but the history of philosophical theology is touched on in some detail too. Many of the theories are ones that seem quite contemporary. We see the same arguments for the existence of God today. The book is wide ranging, discussing everything from epistemology to theology. Moreover the introduction discusses the historical importance of this work in early Christianity (which may be one reason why the theories seem contemporary) as well as the context in which it was written. This is a book that will make you think, and will make you see current theology debates with new eyes. Highly recommended.

I picked this book up on a whim and read it in its entirety in one evening, and promptly started over from the beginning. Not only is Cicero an elegant writer, but unlike many of his contemporaries his arguments are logically thought out and easy to follow. Anyone who has ever wondered if God or the gods would be encompassed in a physical or ethereal form and anyone who has ever wondered just how much involvement any god could have in the day to day lives of human beings will find this book surprisingly modern in its thoughts and conclusions.

P. G. Walsh's edition of "The Nature of the Gods" contains a concise but helpful introductory essay as well as notes on matters historical, philosophical, geographical, and textual. This is fortuitous, for Walsh has put readers in a position to be able to read Cicero's work fluently, receiving brief help with puzzling names or allusions, while not losing the thread of the argument. Walsh's introduction (pp. xi-xlv) discusses with admirable economy (i) Cicero's lifelong interest in philosophy, (ii) his

philosophical works, (iii) traditional Roman religious ideas, (iv) the contents and sources of the work, (v-vii) the views of the gods taken by the major Hellenistic schools of philosophy, (viii) the work's literary form and (ix) the later influence of this "seminal text throughout the history of Western philosophy". There follows a summary of the content which is indispensable for finding one's way through Cicero's argument, a note on the text used and on previous translations, and a select bibliography.

Cicero's famous work, *De Natura Deorum* - on the Nature of the Gods, is important evidence of the theological beliefs of the major philosophical schools during the Late Republic of Rome. It is an important work - and still relevant today in philosophical studies as it is the major text that underlies David Hume's great treatise, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*. It is also important evidence of two fragmentary works of the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus - in parts following closely - *On Signs* and *On Piety*. I go back to this work often as an important witness to understand the thoughts of other major philosophers both ancient and modern.

Good book. Worth reading. I recommend this edition, Oxford Worlds Classics, because the introduction is so informative and helpful in understanding the arguments presented in the book.

OXFORD has shifted gears to accessible translators/translations. The additional information provided by the translators in the OXFORD series make them very much "alive" again.

An interesting read, the book as a bit more wide ranging than I expected... however if you wrestle with theological questions of your own, this book will not be a waste of time.

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