

SPQR

On Divination

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

Musean Translation

MOUSEIA

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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

Complete machine-assisted Musean translation, made directly from the Latin in separate source-only tasks and reviewed throughout against it. Both books, all 130 chapters and 282 numbered sections; no historical English translation used. Latin transcription credited to the Perseus Project under CC BY-SA 4.0, Müller's 1915 Teubner edition.

TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

Written 44 BCE · Philosophical dialogue

SOURCE

Original text from the Perseus Digital Library.

GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

The edition's marked textual gaps and cruces are retained; some bird identifications and fragmentary quotations remain uncertain. Greek terms and ambiguous oracles are translated in context; model review is not human certification.

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Book 1, Chapter 1

- ¹ There is an ancient belief, reaching back to the age of heroes and upheld by the common consent of the Roman people and every nation, that a power of divination exists among human beings. The Greeks call it *μαντικήν*: a foreknowledge and understanding of things to come. A magnificent and saving power, if such a power exists, and the nearest mortal nature can approach the might of the gods! Just as we do many other things better than the Greeks, so our ancestors derived the name of this supreme gift from the gods, while the Greeks, as Plato explains, derived theirs from madness.
- ² Indeed, I see no nation so civilized and learned, or so savage and barbarous, that it does not believe the future is signaled and that certain people can understand those signals and foretell events. To begin with the Assyrians, tracing the authority for this belief to its remotest source: because their country was vast and level, and the sky lay open and unobstructed on every side, they observed the passages and movements of the stars. They recorded these and handed down accounts of what each sign foretold for each person. Among this people the Chaldeans, whose name comes from their nation, not their profession, are thought to have established through long observation a knowledge of the stars that made it possible to predict what would happen to each person and under what destiny each was born. The Egyptians too are believed to have attained the same art over an immense stretch of time, through almost countless generations. The Cilicians and Pisidians, and their neighbors in Pamphylia—peoples whom I myself have governed—believe that the flights and cries of birds reveal the future as the surest of signs.

Book 1, Chapter 2

- ³ What colony did Greece ever send to Aeolis, Ionia, Asia, Sicily, or Italy without consulting the oracle at Delphi, Dodona, or Ammon? What war did it undertake without the gods' advice? Nor was only one kind of divination honored in public and private life. To pass over other peoples, how many kinds our own embraced! First, Romulus, the father of this city, is said not only to have founded it under the auspices but to have been himself a consummate augur. The other kings also employed augurs; and after the kings were expelled, no public business was conducted without auspices, whether at home or on campaign. The discipline of the haruspices seemed to possess great power both in seeking favorable signs and consulting the gods, and in interpreting prodigies and performing rites to avert their consequences. Accordingly, our ancestors brought this entire body of knowledge from Etruria into use, lest any branch of divination should seem neglected.
- ⁴ They also recognized two ways in which the mind, without reasoning or acquired knowledge, is stirred by its own unrestrained and liberated motion: frenzy and dreaming. Believing that divination through frenzy was chiefly contained in the Sibylline verses, they ordained that ten citizens should be chosen to interpret them. In this same category, they often thought the frenzied predictions of soothsayers and prophets deserved a hearing—for example, those of Cornelius Culleolus during the war with Octavius. Nor did the Senate neglect any particularly weighty dreams that seemed to concern the state. Indeed, within our own memory Lucius Julius, who was consul with Publius Rutilius, restored the temple of Juno Sospita by decree of the Senate, in response to a dream of Caecilia, the daughter of Balearicus.

Book 1, Chapter 3

- ⁵ Our ancestors, I believe, accepted these practices less from the instruction of reason than from the lessons of events. Philosophers, however, have assembled some subtle arguments to show that divination is true. Among the most ancient—to begin with them—Xenophanes of Colophon alone rejected divination altogether, though he acknowledged the existence of gods. All the others approved it, except Epicurus with his stammering account of the gods' nature, though they did not approve it in the same way. Socrates and all the Socratics, Zeno and his followers, held to the ancient philosophers' position, with the agreement of the Old Academy and the Peripatetics. Pythagoras had already given the practice great authority, wishing to be an augur himself; and Democritus, an influential thinker, affirmed foreknowledge of the future in many passages. But the Peripatetic Dicaearchus rejected the other forms of divination, retaining dreams and frenzy. Our friend Cratippus, whom I rank with the greatest Peripatetics, likewise put his trust in these and rejected all the rest.
- ⁶ The Stoics defended nearly all those forms. Zeno had scattered what might be called their seeds in his writings, and Cleanthes had developed them somewhat further; then came Chrysippus, a man of penetrating intellect, who set out the entire theory of divination in two books, adding one on oracles and another on dreams. His pupil Diogenes of Babylon followed him with one book, Antipater with two, and our friend Posidonius with five. Yet Panaetius, the teacher of Posidonius and pupil of Antipater, departed from the Stoics, though he was himself a leading member of their school. Even he did not venture to deny the power of divination: he said he was in doubt. If a Stoic was allowed, much against the Stoics' wishes, to do this on one question, will they not allow us to do so on the others? Especially when what remains uncertain to Panaetius seems clearer than sunlight to the rest of his school!

Book 1, Chapter 4

⁷ Here, then, the Academy's distinction has been confirmed by the judgment and testimony of a philosopher of the first rank. As we ourselves inquire what judgment to make about divination, remembering the many incisive and elaborate arguments Carneades directed against the Stoics, and fearing to assent rashly either to falsehood or to something insufficiently understood, we ought, it seems to me, to compare argument with argument, carefully and repeatedly, as we did in the three books I wrote on the nature of the gods. For although rash assent and error are disgraceful in every field, they are most disgraceful where we must decide how much weight to give to auspices, sacred observances, and religion. Here we risk binding ourselves, if we neglect them, to the guilt of impiety, and if we embrace them, to an old woman's superstition.

Book 1, Chapter 5

⁸ We have often discussed these questions, and recently, when I was at my Tusculan villa with my brother Quintus, we examined them somewhat more closely. We had gone for a walk in the Lyceum—the name of the upper gymnasium—when he said, “I finished your third book on the nature of the gods a little while ago. Cotta's argument there has shaken my position, but has not altogether overthrown it.” “Excellent,” I said. “After all, Cotta himself argues in a way that refutes the Stoics' reasoning rather than destroys people's religion.” Then Quintus said, “Cotta does say that, and says it often, I believe, so as not to seem to overstep the bounds generally accepted. But in his eagerness to argue against the Stoics, he seems to me to abolish the gods altogether.

- ⁹ “I am at no great loss for an answer to his reasoning. Religion was defended well enough in the second book by Lucilius, whose argument, as you yourself write at the end of the third, seemed to you closer to the truth. But there is something those books passed over—I suppose because you judged it more convenient to examine and discuss it separately. I mean divination: the prediction and foreknowledge of events considered matters of chance. If you agree, let us examine the extent and nature of its power. My own view is this: if the forms of divination handed down to us and practiced among us are true, gods exist; and conversely, if gods exist, there are people who divine.”

Book 1, Chapter 6

- ¹⁰ “You are defending the Stoics’ citadel, Quintus,” I said, “if those propositions really imply each other: if divination exists, gods exist; and if gods exist, divination exists. Neither proposition is so easily granted as you suppose. Nature might give signs of the future without a god; and even if gods exist, it is possible that they have bestowed no divination on the human race.” He replied, “For my part, the existence of clear and unmistakable forms of divination is sufficient proof that gods exist and concern themselves with human affairs. If you wish, I will explain my own views on these matters—provided your mind is free and you have nothing you think should take precedence over this conversation.”
- ¹¹ “My mind is always free for philosophy, Quintus,” I said. “And now, when there is nothing else I can take pleasure in doing, I am all the more eager to hear what you think about divination.”
- “I have no new doctrine,” he said, “nor any private opinion that sets me apart. I follow a belief of the greatest antiquity, confirmed by the consent of every people and nation. There are two kinds of divination: one belongs to art, the other to nature.

Book 1, Chapter 7

- ¹² “For what nation or city is unmoved by the predictions of interpreters of entrails, prodigies, and lightning, of augurs, astrologers, and those who cast lots—these are, broadly speaking, matters of art—or by dreams and prophecies, the two forms considered natural? In these matters I think we should look more to results than to causes. There is a certain power inherent in nature that foretells the future, sometimes through signs observed over a long period, sometimes through a divine impulse and inspiration. So let Carneades stop pressing the question that Panaetius also asked: whether Jupiter ordered the crow to call on the left and the raven on the right. These things have been observed over immeasurable time; their significance has been recognized in events and recorded. There is nothing the long passage of time cannot achieve and attain, when memory receives its findings and records hand them on.

Book 1, Chapter 8

- ¹³ “We may well marvel at the kinds of herbs and roots physicians have discovered to treat animal bites, diseases of the eyes, and wounds. Reason has never explained their power and nature, yet their usefulness has vindicated both the art and its discoverer. Come, let us consider things that, though belonging to another field, bear a closer resemblance to divination:
- “Often the swelling sea foretells the winds to come,
When suddenly it heaves and swells from deep within,
And rocks, white with the snowy foam of salt water,
Strive to send mournful voices back to Neptune;
Or when a thick, shrill sound, rising from a mountain’s
Lofty summit, grows, echoed again and again from the cliffs.’

“Your *Weather Signs* is full of such foreknowledge. Who, then, can draw out the causes of these intimations? I see that Boëthus the Stoic has tried, though his achievement went only so far as to explain the workings of events that occur in sea or sky.

- 14 “But who could give a plausible reason for the following?
“So too the gray coot, fleeing from the sea’s deep swell,
Cries out to warn that dreadful storms are near,
Pouring loud, abundant cries from its quivering throat.
Often a deeply mournful song rises from the breast
Of the acredula bird, pressing on with morning calls,
Presses on with calls, its mouth pouring complaint on complaint,
As soon as dawn releases the chill dew.
And sometimes the dark crow, running along the shore,
Has plunged its head and let the wave wash over its neck.’

Book 1, Chapter 9

- 15 “We see that these signs almost never lie, yet we do not see why this is so.
“You too perceive the signs, children of fresh water,
When you prepare to pour your hollow cries aloud
And stir the springs and pools with your discordant sound.’
“Who could suspect that little frogs perceive this? Yet there is a certain inherent power in them, by itself quite reliable in giving a signal, though less accessible to human understanding.
“And soft-footed cattle, gazing at the lights of heaven,
Have drawn the moist breath from the air into their nostrils.’
“I do not ask why, since I understand what follows.
“Then the mastic, always green and always laden,
That habitually swells with a threefold crop,
Yields fruit three times, marking three seasons for the plow.’

Book 1, Chapter 10

- ¹⁶ “Here too I do not ask why this tree alone flowers three times, or why it makes the right season for plowing coincide with the sign of its blossom. I am content that, even if I do not know why each thing happens, I understand what happens. I will therefore make the same answer for divination as a whole that I made for the things I have mentioned. I see the power of scammony root to purge, and of aristolochia against snakebites—a plant that took its name from its discoverer, while the discoverer learned its virtue from a dream. Seeing that is enough; I do not know why they have that power. In the same way, I do not fully grasp the explanation of the signs of wind and rain I described; I recognize, know, and accept their force and outcome. Likewise I accept the significance of a cleft or a lobe in the entrails; its cause I do not know. Life is full of such practices: nearly everyone consults entrails. And can we doubt the significance of lightning? Among its many marvels, is this not outstanding? When the statue of Summanus, then made of clay, was struck from heaven on the pediment of the temple of Jupiter Best and Greatest, and its head could nowhere be found, the haruspices declared that it had been hurled into the Tiber. It was found in the very place they indicated.

Book 1, Chapter 11

- ¹⁷ “But whom should I use as an authority or witness rather than you? I have even learned, and gladly, the verses that the Muse Urania speaks in the second book of your poem **On My Consulship**:

“First Jupiter, ablaze with heaven’s fire,
Turns, flooding the whole world with light,
And with his divine mind seeks out sky and earth—
The mind that holds human senses and lives deep within,
Enclosed and sheltered in the eternal ether’s vaults.
And if you wish to know the movements and wandering courses
Of the stars set in the stations of the constellations,
Which wander only in the Greeks’ misleading words,
But in truth are borne along a measured path and span,
You will see that divine mind has ordered everything.

- 18 “For first, in your consulship, the stars’ swift movements
And their grave conjunctions, blazing with light,
You too saw, when you traversed the snow-clad heights
Of the Alban Mount and celebrated the Latin rites with rich milk;
You saw the comets trembling with bright flame,
And thought that much would be thrown into turmoil by slaughter at night,
For the Latin Festival had fallen at an ominous time,
When the moon hid her bright form in gathered shadow
And suddenly was quenched in the starry night.
And what of Phoebus’ torch, grim herald of war,
Which flew in blazing fire toward the great height,
Seeking the sky’s western regions and its setting?
Or when a citizen, struck by a dreadful thunderbolt,
Lost the living light of his eyes on a clear, bright day?
Or when the earth shook through its ponderous body?
Then, too, the many dreadful shapes seen in the night
Gave warning of war and upheaval,
And throughout the land prophets poured from frenzied
Hearts many oracles threatening bitter disasters,

Book 1, Chapter 12

- 19 “And all those things that came to pass at last with the years,
The father of the gods himself foretold would come,
Repeating his clear, unceasing signs through earth and heaven.
Now all that the Lydian haruspex of the Tuscan people
Once proclaimed when Torquatus and Cotta were consuls,
Your year brings together and fulfills, fixed and certain.
For the father who thunders on high, enthroned on starry Olympus,
Once struck his own hills and temples
And hurled his fires upon the Capitol’s heights.
Then Natta’s ancient, venerated bronze image
Fell, and the laws slipped from their age-old sacred keeping,
And the lightning’s blaze destroyed the images of the gods.
- 20 “Here stood the woodland nurse of the Roman name,
The wolf of Mars, who with her swollen udders fed life’s dew
To the little sons sprung from the seed of Mavors.
Then she and the boys fell beneath the blazing thunderbolt,
Torn away, leaving the imprints of her feet.
Who then did not unroll the writings and records of the art,
And draw grim utterances from the Etruscan scrolls?
All warned against a vast disaster, a plague upon the state
Arising from noble stock;
Or with unchanging voice foretold the overthrow of laws,
And urged that the gods’ temples and the city itself be snatched from flames,
And dreadful slaughter and massacre be feared.
These things stood fixed and rooted in a heavy destiny,
Unless a holy image of Jupiter, beautifully fashioned
And raised on a lofty column, first looked toward the bright dawn.
Then the people and the sacred Senate would be able

To see the hidden plot, if, turned toward sunrise,
It looked from there upon the seat of Senate and people.

Book 1, Chapter 13

- 21 “Long delayed and much held back, this image
Was at last set on its lofty pedestal in your consulship.
And at one and the same hour of the appointed, destined time,
Jupiter displayed his scepter from the towering column,
And the ruin prepared for our country with fire and sword
Was revealed by the Allobroges’ words to Senate and people.
Rightly, then, the ancients whose records you preserve,
Who governed peoples and cities with moderation and courage,
Rightly, too, your countrymen, whose reverence and fidelity
Excelled, whose wisdom far surpassed all others,
Above all honored the gods in their living power.
These things were searched to their depths with penetrating care
By those who gladly spent their leisure in noble studies,
- 22 “And in the shady Academy and radiant Lyceum
Poured forth the glorious learning of their fertile minds.
From these pursuits, in the first flowering of your youth,
Your country took you and set you amid great deeds of courage.
Yet, easing your anxious cares with rest,
You have devoted to study and to us the time your country leaves you.’
“Can you, then, bring yourself to argue against what I say about divination—
you who have done what you have done and have written the verses I recited
with such scrupulous care?
- 23 “What, Carneades? Do you ask why these things happen, or by what art they
can be understood? I confess I do not know; but I say you yourself see that they
happen. ‘By chance,’ you say. Really? Can anything happen by chance that

bears every mark of truth? Four knucklebones may fall by chance in a Venus throw; but if you cast four hundred, do you think chance will give you a hundred Venus throws? Colors splashed at random on a panel can form the outlines of a face; but do you think a chance splashing could produce the beauty of the Venus of Cos? If a pig's snout presses the letter A into the ground, could you therefore suppose that it might copy out Ennius' **Andromache**? Carneades used to tell a story that a stone split open in the quarries of Chios disclosed the head of a little Pan. Some shape not unlike it, I suppose—but certainly not one you would say Scopas had made. For this much is certain: chance never imitates truth to perfection.

Book 1, Chapter 14

24 “But sometimes predictions fail to come true.’ What art, I ask, is free of that? I mean the arts that depend on inference and deal in probabilities. Should medicine not count as an art? Yet how often it is mistaken! And do helmsmen never go wrong? Did not the Achaean army and the captains of all those ships leave Troy, as Pacuvius says, ‘rejoicing at their departure, gazing at the fishes’ play,’ so that ‘they could not tire of looking’?

“Meanwhile, with the sun now almost setting, the sea grows rough; Darkness doubles, and the black of night and storm clouds blinds the sky.’

“Did the shipwreck of so many illustrious leaders and kings abolish the art of navigation? Is a general's knowledge worthless because a supreme commander recently lost his army and fled? Is there no method or wisdom in governing a state because Gnaeus Pompey was wrong in many things, Marcus Cato in some, and even you yourself in a few? The response of the haruspices, and all divination based on probability, is of the same kind: it rests on inference and cannot go beyond it.

Book 1, Chapter 15

25 “It may sometimes be mistaken, but most often it points toward the truth. For it reaches back through all eternity, in which the same events followed the same preceding signs almost countless times; an art arose from repeatedly observing and recording the same conjunctions.

“And how dependable your auspices are! Though nowadays—with your leave I say it—the Roman augurs know nothing of them, the Cilicians, Pamphylians, Pisidians, and Lycians preserve their knowledge.

26 “Need I mention our guest-friend King Deiotarus, a man of the highest distinction and integrity, who never does anything without taking the auspices? Once, warned by an eagle’s flight, he turned back from a journey he had planned and settled on. The room where he would have stayed, had he continued, collapsed the following night.

27 “And so, as he himself told me, he has very often turned back after already traveling a distance of many days. What is most admirable is that, even after Caesar deprived him of his tetrarchy, his kingdom, and his money, he says he does not regret the auspices that favored his departure to join Pompey. His arms, he says, defended the authority of the Senate, the freedom of the Roman people, and the dignity of their empire. Those birds had advised him well: on their counsel he had followed duty and kept faith, for glory had mattered more to him than his possessions. He, I think, truly practices augury. Our magistrates, by contrast, use forced auspices. When a piece of food is thrown down and a chicken feeds, a morsel must fall from its beak;

Book 1, Chapter 16

28 “and your rules state that a *tripudium* occurs if any of it falls on solid ground. Yet even the forced feeding I described is what you call a *tripudium solistimum*, the most favorable feeding sign. Thus many auguries and auspices have been utterly lost and abandoned through the negligence of your college, as the wise Cato laments.

“Once, almost no important undertaking, even in private life, went ahead without auspices. The auspices-takers at weddings, who still retain the name though the practice has gone, bear witness to that even now. As we now commonly seek favorable signs in entrails—though even that is done rather less than formerly—so people then sought them in birds before great undertakings. And so, because we do not seek favorable signs on the left, we run into dire and defective ones.

29 “Thus Publius Claudius, the son of Appius the Blind, and his colleague Lucius Junius lost enormous fleets after sailing in defiance of the auspices. The same happened to Agamemnon. When the Achaeans began

“To clamor among themselves and openly trample on the art of entrail-readers, He orders them to sail, with cheers of approval and birds of ill omen.’

“But why turn to ancient history? We see what happened to Marcus Crassus when he disregarded the announcement of dire omens. In this affair your colleague Appius—a good augur, as I often hear you say—showed too little understanding when, as censor, he censured Gaius Ateius, an honorable man and an excellent citizen, entering as the charge that he had fabricated auspices. Very well: that may have been a censor’s business, if he judged them fabricated. But what he added was certainly no augur’s business: that this was the reason the Roman people had suffered their greatest disaster. If that caused the disaster, the fault lies not with the man who announced the warning but with the man who disobeyed it. As this same augur and censor says, the outcome proved

the warning true. Had it been false, it could not have supplied any cause of disaster. For dire omens, like other auspices, like spoken omens and signs, do not cause events to happen: they announce what will happen unless you take precautions.

Book 1, Chapter 17

30 “Ateius’ announcement, then, did not manufacture the cause of the disaster; by bringing a sign to Crassus’ notice, it warned him what would happen unless he took care. Either that announcement meant nothing, or, if it meant something as Appius judges, its meaning was to fasten the guilt not on the man who gave the warning but on the man who refused to obey.

“And your **lituus**, the most celebrated emblem of the augurate—where did it come from? Surely it was the instrument with which Romulus marked out the regions of the sky when he founded the city. That very staff of Romulus, a little rod curved and slightly bent at the tip, named from its likeness to the trumpet called a **lituus**, was kept in the meeting hall of the Salii on the Palatine. When the hall burned down, it was found unharmed.

31 “And many years after Romulus, in the reign of Tarquinius Priscus, what ancient writer fails to tell of Attus Navius’ division of the sky into regions with his staff? As a boy, poverty had made him a swineherd. One of his pigs went missing, and he is said to have vowed that, if he found it, he would offer the god the largest bunch of grapes in the vineyard. When the pig was found, he stood, we are told, in the middle of the vineyard facing south and divided it into four parts. The birds rejected three. He then divided the remaining fourth part into regions and discovered, as the record tells us, a bunch of grapes of marvelous size. When this became known, all his neighbors brought their affairs to him for consultation, and he won great fame and honor.

- 32 “This led King Priscus to summon him. To test his knowledge of augury, the king said he had something in mind, and asked whether it could be done. Attus took the augury and replied that it could. Tarquinius then said he had been thinking that a whetstone could be cut through with a razor. Attus told him to try it. A whetstone was brought into the assembly place and cut through with a razor before the eyes of king and people. From then on, Tarquinius employed Attus Navius as his augur, and the people consulted him about their own affairs.
- 33 “We are told that the whetstone and razor were buried in the assembly place, and a wellhead set above them. Let us deny everything, burn the annals, call these stories inventions—anything, in short, rather than admit that the gods concern themselves with human affairs! But what of the account of Tiberius Gracchus in your own writings? Does it not confirm the discipline of both augurs and haruspices? He held the assembly to elect consuls after unknowingly pitching his augural tent in violation of the ritual: he had crossed the sacred city boundary without taking the auspices. The story is well known, and you yourself have put it on record. Tiberius Gracchus, himself an augur, confirmed the authority of the auspices by admitting his error; and great authority accrued to the discipline of the haruspices, who were brought before the Senate just after the elections and declared that the man who had presided over them was not ritually qualified to do so.

Book 1, Chapter 18

- 34 “I agree, then, with those who have said that there are two kinds of divination, one involving art, the other without it. Art belongs to those who pursue new cases by inference, having learned the old through observation. Those without art foresee the future not by reasoning or inference from observed and recorded signs, but through an excitation of the mind, or its unrestrained and liberated motion. This often happens to dreamers and sometimes to those who prophesy

in frenzy, such as Bacis of Boeotia, Epimenides of Crete, and the Erythraean Sibyl. Oracles too belong in this category—not those drawn from lots duly shuffled, but those poured forth through divine impulse and inspiration. Yet lots themselves are not to be despised if they carry the authority of antiquity, as do those we are told emerged from the earth. I believe divine power can bring it about that a lot drawn fits the matter at hand. The interpreters of all these revelations, like scholars interpreting poets, seem to come very close to the divinatory power of those they interpret.

- 35 “What cleverness is this, then, that seeks to overthrow, by caviling, things strengthened by antiquity? I cannot discover the cause. Perhaps it lies hidden, wrapped in nature’s darkness: the god wished me not to know these things, but only to use them. Use them I will, and I will not be persuaded that all Etruria is mad about entrails, or that this same people goes astray about lightning, or falsely interprets portents. The earth’s rumblings, bellowings, and tremors have often foretold grave events truly, both for our republic and for many other states.

Book 1, Chapter 19

- 36 “And the much-ridiculed birth of a mule’s foal: because offspring had appeared in a creature barren by nature, did not the haruspices pronounce it a portent of an unbelievable birth of evils? And Tiberius Gracchus, son of Publius, twice consul and also censor, a foremost augur as well as a wise man and an outstanding citizen: did he not, as his son Gaius Gracchus left on record, summon the haruspices when two snakes were caught in his house? They replied that, if he released the male, his wife must shortly die, and if he released the female, he himself must die. He judged it fairer that he, with his years behind him, should meet death rather than the youthful daughter of Publius Africanus. He released the female and died a few days later. Let us laugh at the haruspices, call them worthless and empty-headed, and despise men whose discipline has been

vindicated by a supremely wise man and by the outcome and facts themselves! Let us condemn Babylon too, and those who watch the signs of heaven from the Caucasus, tracing the stars' courses through their calculations and measurements. Let us condemn them, I say, as foolish, fraudulent, or shameless—men who preserve in their records, by their own account, four hundred seventy thousand years! Let us decide they are lying, with no fear of the judgment future ages will pass on them.

37 “Very well: foreigners are worthless cheats. Has Greek history lied as well? To turn to natural divination, who does not know the responses Apollo at Delphi gave to Croesus, to the Athenians, Spartans, Tegeans, Argives, and Corinthians? Chrysippus collected countless oracles, none without a trustworthy authority and witness. Since you know them, I pass them over. This one point I maintain: the oracle at Delphi would never have become so renowned and illustrious, nor been filled with such rich gifts from all peoples and kings, had not every age experienced the truth of its responses. ‘But it has long since ceased to do so.’

38 “Then just as it is less honored now because its responses are less strikingly true, it would not have enjoyed such great honor then without the highest truthfulness. The power in the earth that stirred the Pythia’s mind with divine inspiration may have faded with time, just as we see some rivers vanish and dry up, or twist and turn into a different course. But let the explanation be what you will—the question is a large one—provided this remains, which we cannot deny without overturning all history: for many centuries that oracle spoke the truth.

Book 1, Chapter 20

39 “But let us leave oracles and come to dreams. In discussing them, Chrysippus collects a multitude of trivial dreams, doing the same as Antipater, who hunts out instances in which Antiphon’s interpretations certainly show the inter-

preter's ingenuity, though he ought to have used weightier examples. Philistus, a learned and painstaking man who lived in those times, records that the mother of Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, dreamed while pregnant with that very Dionysius that she had given birth to a little satyr. The interpreters of portents, then known in Sicily as Galeotae, answered, according to Philistus, that the child she bore would be the most illustrious man in Greece, enjoying a long run of good fortune.

40 “Am I taking you back to the tales of our poets or the Greeks”? That Vestal in Ennius also tells her dream:

“When the old woman, startled awake, brought a light with trembling limbs,
Then, terrified by her dream, she spoke through tears:
“Daughter of Eurydice, whom our father loved,
All strength and life are now abandoning my body.
For a beautiful man seemed to carry me away through pleasant willow groves,
Along riverbanks and places strange to me; and then alone,
My own dear sister, I seemed to wander,
Slowly tracing your steps and seeking you, unable
To hold you in my heart; no path made my footing sure.

41 ““Then our father seemed to call me with these words:

‘My daughter, first you must endure
Great sorrows; afterward your fortune will rise from the river.’
With that, my sister, our father suddenly withdrew,
Nor showed himself again, though my heart longed for him,
Though with tears I stretched my hands again and again
Toward heaven’s blue vaults, calling in a pleading voice.
At last sleep scarcely released my troubled heart.””

Book 1, Chapter 21

⁴² “Even if a poet invented this, it is not far removed from the ordinary experience of dreams. Let the dream that troubled Priam also be an invention, because
“Hecuba the mother, heavy with child, seemed in sleep
To give birth to a burning torch. At this her husband,
King Priam himself, his mind struck with fear by the dream,
Consumed by cares and sighing,
Sought to avert the curse by sacrificing bleating victims.
Then, seeking peace, he begged an interpretation,
Imploring Apollo to instruct him
What such a portentous dream foretold.
Then from the oracle Apollo’s divine voice
Declared: the first boy born to Priam
Thereafter he must refrain from rearing;
That child would be Troy’s ruin, Pergamum’s destruction.’

Book 1, Chapter 22

⁴³ “Let these, as I said, be dreams from fables; and add to them the dream of Aeneas, which in the Greek annals of our own Fabius Pictor is such that everything Aeneas did, and everything that happened to him, had appeared to him in sleep.
“But let us look nearer home. What of the dream of Tarquinius the Proud, which he himself describes in Accius’ **Brutus**?
⁴⁴ “When at nightfall I gave my body over
To rest, soothing my weary limbs with sleep,
I seemed to see a shepherd drive toward me

A flock of woolly sheep of surpassing beauty.
From it two rams, brothers by birth, were chosen,
And I sacrificed the finer of the two.
Then his brother charged at me with his horns,
Butted me, and with that blow brought me down.
Then, lying on the earth, sorely wounded,
Flat on my back, I beheld in the sky a vast
And wondrous sight: the sun's flaming,
Radiant disk slipped to the right on a new course.'

- 45 "Let us see, then, how the dream-interpreters explained it:
"King, the things people deal with in life, think of, care for, see,
And do and busy themselves with while awake, should occasion
Less wonder when they come in sleep. The gods do not lightly send so great a
vision unforeseen.
So beware: the man you judge as dull as a beast
May possess a heart nobly fortified with wisdom
And drive you from your kingdom. For the vision of the sun
Portends that a change in the people's fortunes
Is very near. May these things turn out well for the people! For that mighty sign
Began its course from left to right: a most auspicious
Augury that Rome's republic will be supreme.'

Book 1, Chapter 23

- 46 "Now let us return to foreign lands. Heraclides of Pontus, a learned man who
heard Plato and studied under him, writes that Phalaris' mother dreamed she
saw the images of the gods she herself had consecrated in her house. Among
them Mercury seemed to pour blood from a bowl he held in his right hand.
When it touched the earth, it seemed to seethe until the whole house over-
flowed with blood. Her son's monstrous cruelty fulfilled his mother's dream.

Need I bring forward from Dinon's **Persian History** the magi's interpretation for the great Cyrus? Dinon writes that, when Cyrus slept, the sun appeared at his feet. Three times he reached for it in vain: the sun rolled away, slipping from his hands and departing. The magi, a class held wise and learned among the Persians, told him that his three attempts to grasp the sun foretold a reign of thirty years. And so it happened: he reached his seventieth year, having begun his reign at forty.

⁴⁷ “Surely there is something that foreknows and divines even among foreign peoples. Consider the Indian Calanus. As he went to his death and mounted a burning pyre, he said, ‘What a glorious departure from life, when, as happened to Hercules, the mortal body burns away and the soul goes out into the light!’ Alexander asked him to say if he wanted anything. ‘All is well,’ he said. ‘I shall see you very soon.’ And so it happened: Alexander died at Babylon a few days later. I turn aside briefly from dreams, to which I shall soon return. It is an established fact that on the very night the temple of Diana at Ephesus burned down, Alexander was born to Olympias; and at daybreak the magi cried out that the night just past had brought forth Asia’s scourge and destruction. So much for the Indians and the magi.

Book 1, Chapter 24

⁴⁸ “Let us return to dreams. Coelius writes that Hannibal wanted to carry off the golden column in the shrine of Juno Lacinia. Unsure whether it was solid gold or merely gilded, he bored into it, and finding it solid, decided to remove it. In his sleep Juno appeared and warned him not to do so, threatening that, if he did, she would see to it that he lost the eye with which he could still see well. A shrewd man, he did not disregard her warning. Instead he had a little heifer made from the gold bored out of the column and set it on top.

- 49 “The following also appears in the Greek history of Silenus, whom Coelius follows, and who chronicled Hannibal’s deeds with the greatest care. After taking Saguntum, Hannibal dreamed he was summoned by Jupiter to the council of the gods. When he arrived, Jupiter ordered him to make war on Italy, and one of the council was appointed his guide. Following this guide, he began to advance with his army. Then the guide instructed him not to look back. Hannibal could not obey for long: overcome by curiosity, he looked. He saw a huge, monstrous beast entwined with snakes, overturning every tree, thicket, and building wherever it passed. In wonder he asked the god what kind of monster it was. The god replied that it was the devastation of Italy, and ordered him to press straight ahead without troubling himself over what was happening behind him, at his back.
- 50 “Agathocles records in his history that Hamilcar the Carthaginian, while besieging Syracuse, dreamed he heard a voice saying that the next day he would dine in Syracuse. When that day dawned, a great mutiny broke out in his camp between the Carthaginian and Sicilian soldiers. The Syracusans learned of it, burst into the camp unexpectedly, and captured Hamilcar alive. Thus events confirmed the dream. History is full of examples, and everyday life is crowded with them.
- 51 “But consider that Publius Decius, son of Quintus, who was the first of the Decii to become consul. While serving as a military tribune in the consulship of Marcus Valerius and Aulus Cornelius, when our army was hard pressed by the Samnites, he took the risks of battle too boldly and was warned to be more careful. He replied, as the annals record, that in a dream he had seen himself in the thick of the enemy, dying with the greatest glory. On that occasion he emerged unharmed and freed the army from encirclement. Three years later, however, as consul, he consecrated himself to death and charged in arms into the Latin battle line. By this act the Latins were defeated and destroyed. His death was so glorious that his son longed for the same.

Book 1, Chapter 25

- 52 “But now, if you agree, let us come to philosophers’ dreams.
“In Plato, Socrates, while in public custody, tells his friend Crito that he must die three days later. He had dreamed of a woman of surpassing beauty who called him by name and spoke a verse of Homer along these lines:
“‘The third glad day will bring you to Phthia.’
“The account says it happened just as foretold. Xenophon the Socratic—what a man, and how great!—describes his own dreams during the campaign he served with Cyrus the Younger, and their remarkable fulfillment.
- 53 “Shall we say Xenophon lies or raves? And Aristotle, a man of singular, almost divine genius—is he mistaken himself, or does he wish to mislead others? He writes that his friend Eudemus of Cyprus, traveling to Macedonia, came to Pherae, then a highly distinguished city in Thessaly, but held in cruel subjection by the tyrant Alexander. There Eudemus fell so gravely ill that all the physicians despaired of him. In his sleep a young man of exceptional beauty appeared and told him that he would recover very soon, that the tyrant Alexander would die within a few days, and that Eudemus himself would return home five years later. Aristotle writes that the first predictions came true at once: Eudemus recovered and the tyrant was killed by his wife’s brothers. But at the end of the fifth year, when the dream had led people to expect his return from Sicily to Cyprus, he fell fighting at Syracuse. From this they interpreted the dream to mean that Eudemus’ soul had returned home when it left his body.
- 54 “To the philosophers let us add a man of the deepest learning, and indeed a divine poet: Sophocles. When a heavy golden bowl had been stolen from the temple of Hercules, he dreamed that the god himself told him who had done it. He ignored the dream once and a second time. When it recurred repeatedly, he went up to the Areopagus and reported the matter. The Areopagites ordered

the arrest of the man Sophocles had named. Under torture he confessed and returned the bowl. From this event the shrine was named the temple of Hercules the Informer.

Book 1, Chapter 26

- ⁵⁵ “But why keep to Greek examples? Somehow our own give me greater pleasure. All our historians tell this story—the Fabii, the Gellii, and most recently Coelius. When the great votive games were first being held during the Latin War, the citizens were suddenly called to arms. The games were therefore interrupted and a repetition was scheduled. Before these renewed games began, when the people had already taken their seats, a slave was led through the circus under a forked yoke, being beaten with rods. Later, a figure appeared in a dream to a Roman countryman and said that the leading dancer at the games had displeased him; he ordered the man to report this to the Senate. The man did not dare. The same command was given a second time, with a warning not to put the speaker’s power to the test. Still he did not dare. Then his son died, and the same warning came a third time in a dream. Now himself disabled, he told his friends. On their advice he was carried to the Senate house on a litter, and after recounting his dream to the Senate, he walked home on his own feet, restored to health. And so, the tradition records, the Senate accepted the dream and had those games repeated once again.

Book 1, Chapter 27

- ⁵⁶ “Gaius Gracchus, as the same Coelius records, told many people that, when he was hesitating over standing for the quaestorship, his brother Tiberius appeared to him in a dream and said that he might delay as long as he wished, but he must nevertheless perish by the same death as Tiberius himself. Coelius

writes that he heard this before Gaius Gracchus became tribune of the plebs, and that Gracchus told it to many people. What could be found more certain than this dream?

“And those two dreams the Stoics so often recount—who could possibly dismiss them? One concerns Simonides. He had found the body of an unknown man lying abandoned and buried it. When he was planning to board a ship, the man he had buried appeared to him in a dream, warning him not to do so: if he sailed, he would die in a shipwreck. Simonides therefore turned back; the others who sailed then were lost.

- 57 “The other, a very famous dream, is handed down in this form. Two Arcadian friends were traveling together and reached Megara. One lodged with an innkeeper, the other with a guest-friend. After supper they went to bed. In the dead of night, the man staying with his guest-friend dreamed that the other begged him to come to his aid: the innkeeper was plotting his death. At first he rose, terrified by the dream. Then, recovering himself and deciding that the vision should be disregarded, he lay down again. As he slept, the same man appeared and begged him, since he had not helped him while alive, not to let his death go unavenged. The innkeeper had murdered him and thrown him into a wagon, he said, then piled manure over him. He asked his friend to be at the city gate in the morning before the wagon left town. This dream truly moved him. In the morning he met the ox-driver at the gate and asked what was in the wagon. The man fled in terror, the body was uncovered, and the innkeeper’s crime was exposed and punished.

Book 1, Chapter 28

- 58 “What could be called more divine than this dream? But why seek more examples, or ancient ones? I have often told you my dream, and often heard yours from you. When I was governing Asia as proconsul, I dreamed that you rode up to the bank of a great river, suddenly went too far forward, slipped into the

water, and vanished. I trembled, stricken with fear. Then suddenly you emerged in high spirits, rode the same horse up the opposite bank, and we embraced. This dream was easy to interpret, and experts in Asia foretold to me the very course events took.

59 “Now I come to yours. I heard it from you yourself, but our friend Sallustius has told it to me more often. During that exile, glorious for us but disastrous for our country, you were staying at a villa on the plain of Atina. You had lain awake much of the night, and only toward dawn began to sleep soundly and deeply. Though your journey pressed, Sallustius ordered silence and would not allow you to be wakened. When you awoke at about the second hour, you told him your dream. You had seemed to be wandering sadly in lonely places when Gaius Marius, with laurel-wreathed fasces, asked you why you were downcast. You told him you had been driven by force from your country. He took your right hand, told you to be of good courage, and handed you over to his nearest lictor to be led to his monument, saying that there you would find deliverance. Sallustius says that he himself then cried out that a swift and glorious return awaited you, and that you too seemed delighted with the dream. As for what followed, I myself soon received the news. You had heard that the Senate’s magnificent decree for your return was passed in Marius’ monument, on the motion of the consul, a most honorable and distinguished man, and that an immense audience in the theater had endorsed it with extraordinary shouts and applause. You then said that nothing could be more divine than your dream at Atina.

Book 1, Chapter 29

60 “‘But many dreams are false.’ Or perhaps obscure to us. Still, let some be false: what do we say in answer to the true ones? Far more would come true if we went to sleep with our faculties unimpaired. As it is, loaded with food and wine, we see confusion and disorder. Consider what Socrates says in Plato’s

Republic: ‘When people sleep, the part of the soul that shares in intellect and reason lies dormant and slack. But the part containing a certain ferocity and savage brutality, stupefied by immoderate eating and drinking, leaps up in sleep and tosses about without restraint. So every kind of vision assails it, stripped of intellect and reason: it seems to couple with its mother, or with anyone else, human or god, often even a beast; to slaughter someone and stain itself with impious blood; and to commit many foul and loathsome acts with recklessness and shamelessness.

- 61 “But suppose a person gives himself to rest after a healthy, moderate way of living and eating, having roused and quickened the part of the soul that thinks and judges, and fed it with a feast of good thoughts. Suppose the part nourished by pleasure is neither starved by want nor overflowing with excess—both commonly blunt the mind’s vision, whether nature lacks something or has an overflowing abundance. Suppose also that the third part of the soul, where anger blazes up, has been soothed and quenched. Then, with the two unruly parts subdued, the third, the seat of reason and intellect, will shine out, showing itself vigorous and keen for dreaming; and the visions that meet it in sleep will be peaceful and true.’ I have rendered Plato’s very words.

Book 1, Chapter 30

- 62 “Shall we listen to Epicurus instead? Carneades, in his eagerness for debate, says now one thing and now another; Epicurus says what he thinks, but never thinks anything refined or noble. Will you set him above Plato and Socrates, who, even if they offered no reasons, would outweigh these petty philosophers by their authority alone? Plato, then, bids us go to sleep with our bodies in such a state that nothing can bring error and disturbance to our minds. This is also thought to be why the Pythagoreans were forbidden to eat beans: that food produces great flatulence, which disturbs the tranquility of a mind seeking truth.

- ⁶³ “When, therefore, sleep withdraws the soul from companionship and contact with the body, it remembers the past, perceives the present, and foresees the future. The sleeper’s body lies like a dead man’s, but the soul is vigorous and alive. Far more will it be so after death, when it has left the body altogether. Hence, as death draws near, its power of divination greatly increases. People afflicted by a grave and fatal illness perceive that death itself is near; images of the dead often appear to them, and at that time they are especially eager for praise, while those who have lived otherwise than they should are then most tormented by remorse for their sins.
- ⁶⁴ “Posidonius offers further support for the divination of the dying with the example of a Rhodian who, as he lay dying, named six men of his own age and said which would die first, which second, and which would follow each in turn. He holds that people dream through the impulse of the gods in three ways: first, the soul foresees by its own power, bound as it is by kinship to the gods; second, the air is full of immortal souls in which the marks of truth appear as though imprinted; third, the gods themselves converse with sleepers. And, as I said just now, it is easier for souls to foretell the future when death is near.

Book 1, Chapter 31

- ⁶⁵ “From this come the words of Calanus, whom I mentioned earlier, and those of Homer’s Hector, who, as he dies, foretells Achilles’ approaching death. Nor would common usage have accepted this expression without reason, if there were no such thing at all:
- ‘My heart foresaw a fruitless journey as I left my home.’
- “For the Latin *sagire* means to perceive keenly: hence old women are called *sagae*, because they want to know so much, and dogs *sagaces*, keen-scented. Someone who perceives a thing before it presents itself is therefore said to *prae-sagire*—to sense the future in advance.

⁶⁶ “The soul, then, has a power of foreknowledge, imparted from outside and lodged within it by divine agency. When it flares more fiercely, it is called frenzy: the soul is drawn away from the body and stirred by a divine impulse.

H. ‘But why this sudden frenzy in your blazing eyes?

Where is the wise restraint you showed so recently, a modest girl?’

C. ‘Mother, a woman far better than the best of women,

I am driven by the ravings of superstitious prophetic visions;

For Apollo drives me mad against my will to speak fate’s decrees.

I shrink before the girls my age; I blush for what I do before my father,

That best of men; my mother, I pity you and loathe myself.

You bore Priam splendid children—all but me; that is my grief.

Must I harm while they help, I resist while they obey?’

“What tender poetry, how true to character, how moving! But this is less to the point;

⁶⁷ “what we are looking for is expressed in the following lines: frenzy often speaks true prophecy.

‘It comes, it comes, a torch wrapped round with blood and fire!

For many years it lay concealed; citizens, bring help and quench it!’

“Now it is a god enclosed in a human body who speaks, not Cassandra.

‘And now upon the mighty sea a swift fleet

Is being built; a swarm sweeps ruin onward;

It will come: a savage host, in sail-winged

Ships, will crowd the shores.’

Book 1, Chapter 32

⁶⁸ “I seem to be talking of tragedies and fables. Yet from you yourself I heard an event of the same kind, not invented but real. Gaius Coponius, a man of exceptional judgment and learning, came to you at Dyrrhachium while commanding the Rhodian fleet with a praetor’s authority. He said that a rower in one of the

Rhodians' quinqueremes had prophesied that in fewer than thirty days Greece would be drenched in blood; that there would be plundering at Dyrrhachium, a flight to the ships, and, for the fugitives, a pitiful backward view of fires; but that the Rhodian fleet was granted an early return and homecoming. You yourself were shaken, you said, and Marcus Varro and Marcus Cato, learned men who were there at the time, were profoundly alarmed. And indeed, only a few days later Labienus arrived, fleeing from Pharsalus. Once he had reported the army's destruction, the rest of the prophecy was soon fulfilled.

69 "For grain plundered and spilled from the storehouses had carpeted every street and alley. Suddenly stricken with terror, you boarded the ships, and at night, looking back toward the town, you saw cargo vessels blazing: the soldiers had set them on fire because their crews had refused to follow. Finally, when the Rhodian fleet deserted you, you realized that the man had been a true prophet.

70 "I have set out as briefly as I could the oracles of dreams and frenzy, which I said involved no art. Both kinds have a single explanation, the one our friend Cratippus commonly gives. Human souls have in some measure been drawn and taken from outside themselves; this implies the existence outside us of a divine soul from which the human soul is derived. The part of the human soul that possesses sensation, movement, and desire is not detached from the body's activity; but the part that shares in reason and understanding is most vigorous when it is furthest removed from the body.

71 "Accordingly, after giving examples of truthful prophecies and dreams, Cratippus generally concludes his argument in this way: 'If the task and function of eyes cannot exist without eyes, while eyes may sometimes fail to perform their function, anyone who has used his eyes even once so as to see truly possesses the visual faculty that sees truly. In the same way, then, if the task and function of divination cannot exist without divination, while someone who possesses divination may sometimes go wrong and fail to see truly, a single instance of a prediction made in such a way that nothing seems to have hap-

pened by chance is enough to establish divination. There are, however, countless instances of this kind. We must therefore acknowledge that divination exists.’

Book 1, Chapter 33

- 72 “But those forms of divination that are explained by interpretation, or have been observed and recorded through their outcomes, are called, as I said above, not natural but artificial. Among their practitioners are haruspices, augurs, and interpreters of signs. The Peripatetics reject these arts; the Stoics defend them. Some are established in records and systematic teaching, as the Etruscan books on haruspicy, lightning, and ritual show, along with your own books on augury. Other signs are interpreted on the spur of the moment: Homer has Calchas predict the number of years of the Trojan War from the number of sparrows. Again, we read in Sulla’s history of something you witnessed. As he was sacrificing before his headquarters in the territory of Nola, a snake suddenly emerged from the foot of the altar. Gaius Postumius the haruspex begged him to lead his army out on an expedition. Sulla did so, and captured the Samnites’ powerfully equipped camp outside the town of Nola.
- 73 “A sign was also interpreted in the case of Dionysius, shortly before he began to reign. Traveling through the territory of Leontini, he led his horse down into a river himself; the horse sank in the whirlpools and did not surface. Despite tremendous efforts he could not drag it out, and went away in distress, as Philistus relates. But when he had gone some distance, he suddenly heard a neigh. He looked back and was delighted to see his horse, full of life, with a swarm of bees settled in its mane. This portent meant that Dionysius would begin to reign a few days later, as he did.

Book 1, Chapter 34

- ⁷⁴ “And what a warning the Spartans received shortly before the disaster at Leuctra, when weapons clattered in Hercules’ shrine and the statue of Hercules streamed with sweat! At the same time in Thebes, according to Callisthenes, the doors of Hercules’ temple, though bolted shut, suddenly opened of their own accord, and the weapons that had been fastened to the walls were found on the ground. At that same time, too, when a sacrifice was being offered to Trophonius at Lebadea, the roosters there began crowing so persistently that they never stopped. The Boeotian augurs then declared that victory belonged to the Thebans, because that bird usually falls silent when defeated, but crows when victorious.
- ⁷⁵ “In that same period many signs foretold to the Spartans the disaster of the battle at Leuctra. A crown of rough, wild plants suddenly appeared on the head of the statue at Delphi of Lysander, their most illustrious countryman. There were also golden stars at Delphi, dedicated by the Spartans after Lysander’s naval victory that crushed the Athenians. Because Castor and Pollux were said to have appeared with the Spartan fleet in that battle, the golden stars I have mentioned were set up at Delphi as those gods’ emblems. Shortly before the battle at Leuctra they fell down and could not be found.
- ⁷⁶ “But the greatest portent for those same Spartans came when they sought an oracle from Jupiter at Dodona, inquiring about victory. Their envoys had set out the vessel containing the lots, when a pet monkey belonging to the king of the Molossians upset both the lots themselves and everything else prepared for the drawing, scattering them in all directions. The priestess in charge of the oracle is then said to have declared that the Spartans should be thinking of survival, not victory.

Book 1, Chapter 35

⁷⁷ “And in the Second Punic War, did not Gaius Flaminius, consul for the second time, neglect signs of the future, with terrible loss to the state? After purifying his army, he had broken camp for Arretium and was leading his legions against Hannibal, when both he and his horse suddenly fell for no reason before the statue of Jupiter Stator. Yet he felt no religious scruple at this, though the sign, as the experts understood it, had been put in his path to warn him not to join battle. Again, when he was taking the auspices from the chickens’ feeding, their keeper tried to postpone the day of battle. Flaminius asked what he thought should be done if the chickens refused to eat even later. When the man replied that they must stay still, Flaminius said: ‘Splendid auspices indeed, if we can act when the chickens are hungry, but do nothing when they are full!’ He therefore ordered the standards pulled up and the troops to follow him. At that point the standard-bearer of the first company of spearmen could not move his standard from its place, and even when more men came to help they made no progress. On receiving the report, Flaminius ignored it, as usual. And so, within those three hours, his army was cut to pieces and he himself was killed.

Book 1, Chapter 36

⁷⁸ “Coelius adds another striking fact. At the very time this disastrous battle was being fought, earthquakes of such force struck Liguria, Gaul, several islands, and all of Italy that many towns collapsed; in many places landslides occurred and the earth subsided, rivers reversed their courses, and the sea poured into their channels.

“Experts can make reliable interpretations in divination. When the famous Phrygian Midas was a sleeping child, ants piled grains of wheat into his mouth. It was predicted that he would be immensely rich, and so he was. But when bees settled on the lips of the infant Plato as he slept in his cradle, the interpretation was that his speech would possess a singular sweetness. Thus his future eloquence was foreseen in infancy.

- 79 “And Roscius, your darling and delight—was he lying, or was the whole of Lanuvium lying on his behalf? When he was still in his cradle, being brought up at Solonium, a plain in the territory of Lanuvium, his nurse woke one night and, by the light beside her, noticed that the sleeping child was wrapped in a snake’s coils. Terrified at the sight, she cried out. Roscius’ father consulted the haruspices, who replied that no one would be more distinguished or more famous than that child. Pasiteles engraved this scene in silver, and our friend Archias gave it form in verse. What, then, are we waiting for? For the immortal gods to mingle with us in the Forum, in the streets, in our homes? They do not present themselves in person, but spread their power far and wide, sometimes confining it within the earth’s caverns, sometimes weaving it into human natures. For the earth’s power stirred the Pythia at Delphi, and the power of her own nature stirred the Sibyl. Why, do we not see how varied the different kinds of land are? Some places are deadly, such as Ampsanctus in the country of the Hirpini and the Plutonian sites in Asia, which we have seen. Other tracts are pestilential or healthy; some produce keen minds, others dull ones. All this results from differences in the climate and from the unequal exhalations of the earth.

Book 1, Chapter 37

- 80 “Often, too, some vision, the solemn sound of voices, or song gives the soul a more powerful impulse; often anxiety and fear do so, as in the case of that woman,

‘Her heart distraught, as though possessed, or stirred by Bacchus’ rites,
Remembering her Teucer among the burial mounds.’

“That very excitement also reveals a divine power within the soul. Democritus denies that anyone can be a great poet without frenzy, and Plato says the same. Let him call it frenzy if he pleases, provided he praises that frenzy as it is praised in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. And what of your speeches in court, what of their very delivery? Can they be forceful, weighty, and abundant unless the soul itself is stirred more intensely? Indeed, I have often seen in you—and, to turn to lighter matters, in your friend Aesopus—such fire of expression and gesture that some power seemed to have carried him beyond conscious awareness.

Book 1, Chapter 38

⁸¹ “Often, too, forms appear before us that have no real existence, but present themselves to sight. This is said to have happened to Brennus and his Gallic forces when he launched his sacrilegious attack on the shrine of Apollo at Delphi. Then, they say, the Pythia spoke from the oracle:

‘I will see to this, with the white maidens.’

“And so it happened that maidens were seen bearing arms against them, and the Gallic army was buried in snow.

“Aristotle indeed thought that even those who were maddened by illness and called melancholics had something prophetic and divine in their souls. But I am inclined to think that we should grant this neither to sufferers from heart disease nor to the delirious: divination belongs to a sound soul, not to a disordered body.

⁸² “That divination really exists is established by this Stoic argument: ‘If gods exist and do not declare the future to human beings in advance, either they do not love humanity, or they do not know what will happen, or they think it is of no concern to humanity to know the future, or they do not think it consistent with their majesty to foretell the future to human beings, or even the gods

themselves cannot signify it. But they do not fail to love us, for they are beneficent and friendly to the human race; nor are they ignorant of what they themselves have ordained and determined; nor is it of no concern to us to know what will happen, for with knowledge we shall be more cautious; nor do they consider it beneath their majesty, for nothing surpasses beneficence; nor are they unable to foreknow the future;

- 83 “therefore it is not the case that gods exist and do not signify the future. But gods do exist; therefore they signify it. And if they signify it, they do not fail to give us ways of understanding their signs, for otherwise their signs would be pointless; nor, if they give us such ways, can divination fail to exist. Therefore divination exists.’

Book 1, Chapter 39

- 84 “This is the argument used by Chrysippus, Diogenes, and Antipater. What reason, then, is there to doubt the absolute truth of what I have argued, if reason is on my side, if events are, if peoples and nations are, Greeks and foreigners alike, and even our own ancestors; if, in short, this has always been the accepted belief; if the greatest philosophers support it, and poets, and the wisest men who established states and founded cities? Are we waiting for the beasts to speak, dissatisfied with the unanimous authority of humanity?
- 85 “Indeed, the only objection offered to the existence of the kinds of divination I describe is that it seems difficult to explain the principle and cause of each. What reason can the haruspex give why a cleft in the lung, even when the other entrails are favorable, interrupts proceedings and postpones the day? What reason can the augur give why a raven on the right or a crow on the left confirms an undertaking? What can the astrologer say about why Jupiter or Venus in conjunction with the moon at a child’s birth is beneficial, while Saturn or Mars

has the opposite effect? Why does a god warn us when we sleep and neglect us when we are awake? And why can Cassandra foresee the future in her frenzy, while Priam in his wisdom cannot do the same?

- ⁸⁶ “You ask why each thing happens. Quite right; but that is not the question now. The question is whether it happens or not. It is as if I said there was a magnetic stone that drew and pulled iron toward itself, and, because I could not explain why this happened, you denied that it happened at all. You do just the same with divination, which we ourselves witness, hear about, read of, and have inherited from our fathers. Before the revelation of philosophy, itself a recent discovery, ordinary life had no doubts on this subject; and after philosophy advanced, no philosopher of any standing held a different view.

Book 1, Chapter 40

- ⁸⁷ “I have spoken of Pythagoras, Democritus, and Socrates; among the ancients I excepted no one but Xenophanes, and I added the Old Academy, the Peripatetics, and the Stoics. Epicurus alone dissents. Yet what could be more disgraceful than his further belief that no virtue is practiced for its own sake? “Who could fail to be moved by antiquity, attested and recorded in the most illustrious memorials? Homer writes that Calchas was by far the best augur, and that he guided the fleets to Troy—through his knowledge of auspices, I suppose, not of geography.
- ⁸⁸ “Amphilochus and Mopsus were kings of the Argives, but also augurs, and they founded Greek cities on the coast of Cilicia. Earlier still, Amphiarus and Tiresias were not lowly, obscure men, nor like those who, in Ennius’ words, ‘For their own profit conjure up invented revelations,’ “but distinguished and eminent men who, warned by birds and signs, foretold the future. Of one of them Homer says that even among the dead ‘he alone has understanding, while the others flit about like shadows.’ As for Amphiarus,

Greek tradition has so honored him that he is regarded as a god, and oracles are sought from the ground in which he lies buried.

- ⁸⁹ “And did not Priam, king of Asia, have both a son, Helenus, and a daughter, Cassandra, who practiced divination—the one through augury, the other through a divine stirring and agitation of the mind? We read that among our ancestors there were certain brothers of the Marcius family, men of noble birth, who belonged to this latter class. And does not Homer relate that Polyidus of Corinth made many predictions to others, and foretold death to his son as he left for Troy? In general, among the ancients, the men who held power also understood augury: they considered divination, like wisdom, a royal accomplishment. Our own state bears witness: here the kings were augurs, and afterward private citizens, invested with that same priesthood, guided the state through the authority of religion.

Book 1, Chapter 41

- ⁹⁰ “Nor has this practice of divination been neglected even among foreign peoples. In Gaul there are Druids, and I myself knew one of them, Divitiacus the Aeduan, your guest-friend and admirer. He professed a knowledge of nature’s workings, what the Greeks call *φυσιολογία*, the study of nature, and foretold the future partly through augury and partly through interpretation. Among the Persians, too, the Magi practice augury and divination. They gather in a shrine to study and confer with one another, as you augurs yourselves once used to do on the Nones;
- ⁹¹ “and no one can become king of Persia without first mastering the teaching and knowledge of the Magi. We can also see particular families and nations devoted to this science. There is Telmessus in Caria, a city where the discipline of the

haruspices excels. Elis in the Peloponnese likewise has two particular families, the Iamidae and the Clutidae, preeminent for their renown in haruspicy. In Syria the Chaldeans excel in knowledge of the stars and keenness of intellect.

- ⁹² “Etruria observes lightning strikes with consummate expertise, and also interprets what each marvel and portent signifies. Our ancestors’ senate therefore acted wisely when, at the height of our power, it decreed that ten sons of leading families from each of the peoples of Etruria should be handed over for instruction. So great an art should not, through the poverty of its practitioners, be diverted from religious authority to paid employment and profit. The Phrygians, Pisidians, Cilicians, and the Arab people pay the closest heed to signs from birds; we have learned that the same practice was customary in Umbria.

Book 1, Chapter 42

- ⁹³ “Indeed, I think opportunities for divination also arose from the very places each people inhabited. The Egyptians and Babylonians lived on broad, level plains, where nothing rose from the earth to obstruct their contemplation of the heavens, and so devoted all their attention to knowledge of the stars. The Etruscans, steeped in religion, sacrificed victims more zealously and more often, and thus applied themselves above all to understanding the entrails. And because the density of their atmosphere brought many events from the sky, and for the same reason many strange things arose—some from the sky, others from the earth, and still others in the conception and birth of humans and livestock—they became highly practiced interpreters of portents. As you often say, the very words our ancestors wisely chose reveal the force of these signs: ostanta, portenta, monstra, and prodigia are so called because they display, foreshadow, show, and foretell.

- ⁹⁴ “The Arabs, Phrygians, and Cilicians, however, live chiefly by tending livestock, roaming plains and mountains in winter and summer, and therefore more readily observed the calls and flights of birds. The same explanation applies to Pisidia and to our own Umbria. Then all Caria, and especially the people of Telmessus whom I mentioned before, were diligent observers of portents, because they inhabited exceptionally rich and fertile lands, whose fertility could shape and bring forth many unusual things.

Book 1, Chapter 43

- ⁹⁵ “Who does not see that auspices and the other forms of divination have carried the greatest weight in every well-ordered state? What king or people ever lived without using divine prediction? And not only in peace, but far more in war, where the struggle and the danger to survival were greater. I leave aside our own people, who consult entrails before every action in war and observe auspices before every action at home; let us look abroad. The Athenians always brought certain divining priests, whom they call μάντις, seers, into all their public deliberations. The Spartans gave their kings an augur to sit beside them, and also required an augur to attend their elders, as they call their public council. On more important matters they always sought an oracle at Delphi, from Ammon, or from Dodona.
- ⁹⁶ “Lycurgus, who framed the Spartan constitution, confirmed his laws by the authority of Apollo at Delphi; and when Lysander wished to alter them, that same religious authority prevented him. Nor were the Spartan magistrates content with the cares of their waking hours: they spent the night in Pasiphae’s shrine, in the countryside near the city, for the purpose of dreaming, because they believed the oracles of sleep were true.

⁹⁷ “Now I return to our own affairs. How often the senate has ordered the Board of Ten to consult the books! In what momentous matters, and how frequently, it has obeyed the responses of the haruspices! There were the appearances of two suns, of three moons, of blazing torches; the sun was seen at night, a roar was heard from the sky, the heavens seemed to split apart and globes were observed within them. The senate also received reports of a collapse in the territory of Privernum, where the earth had sunk to an unfathomable depth, and of tremendous earthquakes that had shaken Apulia. These portents foretold great wars and destructive civil strife for the Roman people; and in all these cases the responses of the haruspices agreed with the Sibyl’s verses.

⁹⁸ “And when Apollo at Cumae and Victory at Capua sweated? Was not the birth of a child with both sexes a portent of destiny? What of the river Atratus flowing with blood? What of the showers that so often rained stones, sometimes blood, at other times earth, and once even milk? And when lightning struck the Centaur on the Capitol, gates and people on the Aventine, the temple of Castor and Pollux at Tusculum, and that of Piety at Rome—did not the haruspices foretell what came to pass, and were not the same predictions found in the Sibyl’s books?

Book 1, Chapter 44

⁹⁹ “Only recently, during the Marsic War, a dream of Caecilia, daughter of Quintus, led the senate to restore the temple of Juno Sospita, the Savior. Sisenna argues that this dream corresponded wonderfully, down to the very word, with what happened; then, perversely, and I suppose at some Epicurean’s prompting, he argues that dreams should not be trusted. Yet he offers no argument against portents. He relates that at the beginning of the Marsic War statues of the gods sweated, blood flowed, the heavens split apart, and voices from unseen sources were heard announcing the dangers of war; at Lanuvium shields were gnawed by mice, which the haruspices considered a most ominous sign.

100 “And what of the account in our annals? During the war with Veii, when Lake Alban rose beyond its usual measure, a certain man of noble birth defected to us from Veii. He said that according to the prophecies the Veientes possessed in writing, Veii could not be captured as long as that lake overflowed; if its waters were released and ran down their natural course to the sea, it would bring ruin to the Roman people; but if they were drawn off in such a way that they could not reach the sea, it would bring salvation to our people. Hence that marvelous drainage channel our ancestors made for the Alban waters. But when the Veientes, exhausted by war, sent envoys to the senate, one of them is said to have declared that the defector had not dared tell the senate everything: the same written prophecies in the possession of Veii said that Rome would soon be taken by the Gauls. And that, as we know, happened six years after the capture of Veii.

Book 1, Chapter 45

101 “Often, too, Fauns are said to have been heard in battle, and in troubled times truthful voices to have sounded from unseen sources. Of the many examples, let me give two, and those among the greatest. Not long before the capture of the city, a voice was heard from Vesta’s grove, which slopes down from the foot of the Palatine to the New Street. It said that the walls and gates must be repaired; unless precautions were taken, Rome would be captured. Neglected when the danger could still have been averted, this warning was atoned for after that overwhelming disaster: an altar to Aius Loquens—the enclosed altar we can still see—was consecrated opposite the spot. Many writers also record that after an earthquake a voice came from Juno’s temple on the citadel, ordering an expiatory sacrifice of a pregnant sow. For this reason that Juno was called Moneta, the Warner. Are we, then, to despise these signs, given by the gods and recognized by our ancestors?

102 “The Pythagoreans attended not only to the voices of gods, but also to those of human beings, which they call omens. Because our ancestors thought these had force, they prefaced every undertaking with the words ‘May this be good, auspicious, happy, and fortunate.’ At public religious rites people were commanded to ‘speak only favorable words,’ and when holidays were proclaimed, to ‘refrain from lawsuits and quarrels.’ Likewise, when the founder of a colony purified it, or a commander purified his army, or a censor the people, men with auspicious names were chosen to lead the sacrificial victims. The consuls observe the same rule in the levy, making sure that the first soldier enrolled has an auspicious name.

Book 1, Chapter 46

103 “You know that you yourself observed these rules with the utmost religious care, both as consul and as commander. Our ancestors also intended the century chosen to vote first to furnish an omen for the formal election. Let me offer some familiar examples of omens. Lucius Paulus, consul for the second time, had been assigned the war against King Perseus. Returning home toward evening that very day, he kissed his little daughter Tertia, then still very young, and noticed that she was rather sad. ‘What is it, my Tertia?’ he asked. ‘Why are you sad?’ ‘Father,’ she said, ‘Persa is dead.’ Then he hugged the child more closely and said, ‘My daughter, I accept the omen.’ It was a puppy of that name that had died.

104 “I heard Lucius Flaccus, the priest of Mars, tell how Caecilia, Metellus’ wife, wishing to arrange a marriage for her sister’s daughter, went to a little shrine to take an omen, as was customary in the old days. The girl stood while Caecilia sat on a chair, and for a long time no voice was heard. At last the girl grew tired and asked her aunt to give her a place, so that she could rest a little in her chair. ‘Of course, my girl,’ she replied, ‘I give you my place.’ Events fulfilled the omen: Caecilia herself died shortly afterward, and the girl married the man who had

been Caecilia's husband. I understand perfectly that these things can be despised or even laughed at. But to despise what the gods signify is itself to disbelieve in the gods.

Book 1, Chapter 47

105 “Why should I speak of augurs? That is your part: yours, I insist, should be the defense of the auspices. When you were consul, the augur Appius Claudius reported to you, after a doubtful augury for the state's safety, that a grim and turbulent civil war would arise. It broke out a few months later, and you crushed it in even fewer days. I strongly agree with that augur: alone within the memory of many years, he preserved the discipline not of chanting augural formulas but of divination. Your colleagues mocked him, calling him now a Pisidian, now a Soran augur. They thought augury contained neither foreknowledge nor any true understanding of the future; in their wisdom, they said that religious observances had been invented to sway the ignorant. That is far from the truth. Neither those shepherds whom Romulus led nor Romulus himself could have possessed the cunning to fabricate the semblance of religion in order to deceive the multitude. But the difficulty and labor of learning have made their negligence eloquent: they would rather argue that auspices mean nothing than learn what they mean.

106 “What could be more divine than the auspice in your Marius? Let me choose you above all as my authority:
‘Here suddenly the winged attendant of high-thundering Jupiter,
Wounded by a serpent's bite, rises from a tree trunk,
Herself transfixing in her savage talons the snake,
Half-dead, its mottled neck still writhing heavily.
She tears it as it writhes and bloodies it with her beak,
Until her spirit sated, her bitter pain avenged,
She casts it out, gasping, and dashes it mangled into the water,

Then turns from the setting sun toward its radiant rising.
Her, gliding in flight on her swift wings,
Marius beheld, interpreter of the divine will;
And as he marked the happy signs of his own glory and return,
The Father himself thundered from the left quarter of the sky.
So Jupiter confirmed the eagle's glorious omen.'

Book 1, Chapter 48

- 107 "And Romulus' augury belonged to shepherd life, not city life; it was not fabricated to influence the ignorant, but received from trustworthy men and handed down to posterity. Thus Romulus the augur, as Ennius tells it, together with his brother, also an augur,
'Deeply intent, and each desiring
Kingship, devote themselves to auspice and augury together.
On the hill Remus gives himself to the auspice and, alone,
Watches for a favorable bird. But handsome Romulus on high
Seeks on the Aventine, watching the race of high-flying birds.
They vied: would the city be called Rome or Remora?
Every man was anxious: which would be the ruler?
They wait, as when the consul means to give the starting
Signal, and all watch eagerly the edges of the stalls,
- 108 How soon he will send chariots from the painted mouths:
So the people waited, their faces fearful,
To whom the victory of mighty kingship would be given.
Meanwhile the pale sun withdrew into the depths of night.
Then shining light came forth, struck through with rays,
And at once, far overhead, a bird of matchless beauty
Flew auspiciously on the left. At once the golden sun arose;
Three times four sacred shapes descend

From heaven—birds alighting in fair and favorable places.
Then Romulus sees that first place has been granted him,
The throne and ground of kingship made firm by the auspice.’

Book 1, Chapter 49

- 109 “But to bring my argument back to the point from which it wandered: if I could give no explanation of why each thing happens, and merely showed that the things I have described do happen, would my answer to Epicurus or Carneades be inadequate? What if an explanation of artificial foreknowledge is actually easy to give, while that of divinely inspired foreknowledge is somewhat less clear? For predictions drawn from entrails, lightning, portents, and stars have been recorded through long observation. In every field, the long observation of ages brings astonishing knowledge. This may exist even without any movement or impulse from the gods, once repeated attention has revealed what follows from each thing and what signifies each event.
- 110 “The other kind of divination is natural, as I said before. Through a subtle inquiry into nature, it must be traced to the nature of the gods, from which, according to the most learned and wisest thinkers, our souls have been drawn, each a small share. Since all things are filled and pervaded with eternal awareness and divine mind, human souls must be stirred by their kinship with divine souls. But while awake, souls serve life’s necessities and, hampered by the body’s bonds, sever themselves from fellowship with the divine.
- 111 “There is a rare class of people who withdraw from the body and are swept with all their care and zeal toward knowledge of divine things. Their predictions come not from divine impulse but from human reason: through nature they foresee future events, such as floods and the conflagration that will one day consume heaven and earth. Others, experienced in public affairs, foresee the rise of tyranny long beforehand, as we are told of Solon the Athenian. We may

call such men prudent—that is, provident, seeing ahead—but we cannot possibly call them diviners, any more than Thales of Miletus. To refute his critics and show that even a philosopher could make money if he found it worthwhile, he is said to have bought up the whole olive crop in the territory of Miletus before it began to flower.

Book 1, Chapter 50

112 “Perhaps some special knowledge had shown him that the olive harvest would be abundant. He is also said to have been the first to predict the eclipse of the sun that occurred in the reign of Astyages.

“Doctors foresee many things, as do pilots and farmers, but I call none of their predictions divination—not even the warning given to the Spartans by Anaximander, the natural philosopher, to leave their city and houses and spend the night armed in the countryside, because an earthquake was imminent. At that time the entire city collapsed, and the end of Mount Taygetus was torn away like a ship’s stern. Nor should Pherecydes, the famous teacher of Pythagoras, be considered a diviner rather than a natural philosopher because, on seeing water drawn from a never-failing well, he declared that an earthquake was imminent.

113 “Indeed, the human soul never divines naturally unless it is so unbound and free that it has absolutely no dealings with the body. This happens either to prophets or to sleepers. Dicaearchus therefore accepts these two kinds, as does our friend Cratippus, as I said. If it is because they arise from nature, let them certainly rank highest, provided they are not the only ones. But if these men think observation has no value, they abolish much that sustains the conduct of life. Still, since they grant something, and no small thing—prophecy together with dreams—we have no reason to fight them very hard, especially when some people accept no divination at all.

- 114 “Those, then, whose souls spurn their bodies, take wing, and range abroad, fired and stirred by some ardor, surely see the things they proclaim in prophecy. Many things kindle such souls, no longer fastened to their bodies: some are stirred by a particular sound of voices and by Phrygian songs. Groves and forests move many, rivers or seas many others, whose frenzied minds see far in advance what will happen. Of this kind are these lines:
‘Alas, look!
Someone will give a famous judgment among three goddesses;
Through that judgment a Spartan woman, one of the Furies, will come.’
“For in the same way prophets have often foretold many things, not only in words but also in
‘Verses such as Fauns and prophets sang of old.’

Book 1, Chapter 51

- 115 “The prophets Marcius and Publicius are said to have sung in the same way; of this kind, too, were the revelations of Apollo’s mysteries. I also believe that certain exhalations rose from the earth, filling minds with inspiration so that they poured forth oracles.
“This, then, explains prophets, and the explanation of dreams is certainly not unlike it. What happens to prophets while awake happens to us in sleep. For in dreams the soul is vigorous, freed from the senses and from every hindrance of care, while the body lies almost dead. Since it has lived from all eternity and mingled with innumerable souls, it sees everything that exists in the nature of things—provided that moderation in food and drink has put it in a condition to remain awake itself while the body sleeps. Such is the divination of the dreamer.
- 116 “Here arises a great field of interpretation, not natural but artificial: Antiphon’s interpretation of dreams, and likewise that of oracles and prophecies. For there are interpreters of these, just as scholars interpret poets. Divine nature would

have produced gold and silver, bronze and iron in vain, had she not also taught us how to reach their veins; nor would she have given the earth's crops or the trees' berries with any benefit to humanity, had she not passed on their cultivation and preservation; nor would timber help us at all if we lacked the craft of working it. In the same way, every benefit the gods have given humanity is accompanied by some art through which that benefit can be enjoyed. Accordingly, because dreams, prophecies, and oracles contained much that was obscure and much that was ambiguous, interpreters supplied explanations.

- 117 “But how prophets or dreamers see things that do not yet exist anywhere is a great question. If, however, we establish what ought to be investigated first, our present inquiries will be easier. For this whole question rests on the account of the nature of the gods that you explained so clearly in your second book. If we maintain that account, the foundation of our present subject will stand: gods exist, the universe is governed by their providence, and they care for human affairs, not only in the whole but in each particular case. If we hold to these principles, which seem to me unassailable, the gods must surely give human beings signs of the future.

Book 1, Chapter 52

- 118 “But we should distinguish how they do so. The Stoics do not hold that a god is present at every cleft in a liver or every birdcall: that is neither fitting nor worthy of the gods, nor in any way possible. Rather, the universe was so constituted from its beginning that certain signs should precede certain events—some in entrails, some in birds, some in lightning, some in portents, some in stars, some in the visions of dreamers, and some in the voices of the frenzied. Those who have grasped these signs well are not often deceived. Mistaken inferences and interpretations prove false not through any fault in the things themselves, but through the interpreters' ignorance. Once we establish and grant that some divine power encompasses human life, it is not difficult to conceive

how the things we certainly see happening come about. For a conscious power diffused throughout the universe may guide the choice of a sacrificial victim; and at the very moment you intend to sacrifice, a change in the entrails may occur, so that something is missing or something is added. With slight impulses nature fashions, alters, or removes many things.

- 119 “A most powerful proof, leaving no room for doubt, is what happened shortly before Caesar’s death. He was sacrificing on the day when he first sat in a golden chair and appeared in a purple robe, and among the entrails of a fat ox there was no heart. Do you suppose, then, that any creature possessing blood can live without a heart? He was shaken by this strange occurrence, and Spurinna said there was reason to fear that both judgment and life might fail him, since both had their source in the heart. The following day the liver’s head-lobe was missing. These things were portended to him by the immortal gods so that he might see his destruction, not escape it. When, therefore, parts are not found among the entrails without which the victim could not have lived, we must understand that those missing parts perished at the very moment of sacrifice.

Book 1, Chapter 53

- 120 “The same divine mind causes birds to do the same: birds whose flight gives omens fly now this way, now that, or hide themselves now in one quarter, now in another, while birds whose calls give omens sing now on the right, now on the left. For every animal moves its body as it wishes—face down, sideways, or face up—and bends, twists, extends, and draws in its limbs wherever it wishes, doing these things almost before it thinks. How much easier, then, for a god, whose will all things obey!

121 “He also sends us signs of the kind history has handed down in such abundance. For instance, we find it written that if the moon were eclipsed in the sign of Leo shortly before sunrise, Darius and the Persians would be defeated in battle by Alexander and the Macedonians, and Darius would die; that if a girl were born with two heads, there would be sedition among the people, corruption and adultery in the home; and that if a woman were seen to have given birth to a lion, the state in which it happened would be conquered by foreign nations. The same kind of sign appears in Herodotus’ account of Croesus’ son, who had been unable to speak, speaking: the portent foretold the utter collapse of his father’s kingdom and household. What history has failed to relate that the head of Servius Tullius blazed as he slept? Just as someone who goes to rest with his mind prepared by good thoughts and his circumstances arranged for tranquility sees certain and truthful things in dreams, so a chaste and pure soul when awake is better prepared to perceive the truth in stars, birds, other signs, and entrails.

Book 1, Chapter 54

122 “This is surely what we have learned about Socrates, and what he himself often says in the writings of the Socratics: there was something divine, which he calls his *δαίμονιον*, his divine sign, that he always obeyed. It never urged him on, but often called him back. And Socrates—what better authority could we ask for?—when Xenophon consulted him about whether to join Cyrus, first explained his own view, then said: ‘Our counsel, however, is only human; on obscure and uncertain matters I think we should refer the question to Apollo.’ The Athenians, too, always consulted Apollo publicly on their more important affairs.

123 “It is also recorded that on seeing his friend Crito with a bandage over his eye, Socrates asked what was wrong. Crito replied that while he was walking in the country a bent twig had been released and sprung back into his eye. Socrates

then said: ‘You did not obey me when I called you back, using my usual divine foreknowledge.’ Again, after the defeat at Delium, where Laches was in command, Socrates was fleeing with Laches himself. When they reached a place where three roads met, he refused to flee the same way as the others. They asked why he would not go along their road, and he replied that the god was warning him away. Those who fled by the other route did indeed fall in with the enemy cavalry. Antipater has collected a vast number of remarkable predictions made by Socrates. I shall pass over them, since you know them and I have no need to recount them.

Book 1, Chapter 55

124 “Yet there is something magnificent, almost divine, in that philosopher’s declaration, after his condemnation by impious votes, that he faced death with complete serenity. Neither when leaving home nor when mounting the platform where he had pleaded his case had he received from the god any of his customary signs warning of impending evil.

“For my part, I believe that even if those who seem to divine through art or interpretation are often mistaken, divination still exists; human beings can make mistakes in this art as in all others. A sign given ambiguously may have been taken as certain; a sign itself may have gone unnoticed, or one that contradicted it. To establish my argument, it is enough for me to find instances of things divinely foreknown and predicted—not necessarily many, but even a few.

125 “Indeed, I would go further and say without hesitation: if even one thing has been predicted and foreknown in such a way that, when it occurs, it happens as predicted, and nothing in it appears to have come about by accident or chance, then divination certainly exists, and everyone must acknowledge it.

“Accordingly, I think, as Posidonius does, that the whole power and principle of divination must be traced first to god, of whom enough has been said, then to fate, and then to nature. Reason compels us to admit, then, that everything happens by fate. By fate I mean what the Greeks call *εἰμαρμένην*: the order and sequence of causes, in which one cause, linked to another, brings an event into being. This is the everlasting truth flowing from all eternity. Since this is so, nothing has happened that was not going to happen, and likewise nothing will happen whose effective causes are not already contained in nature.

- 126 “From this we understand that fate is not what superstition calls it, but what natural philosophy describes: the eternal cause of things, explaining why past events happened, present events happen, and future events will happen. Thus observation can record which event usually follows each cause, even if not always—for that would indeed be difficult to maintain. It is also likely that these same causes of future events are perceived by those who see them either in frenzy or in sleep.

Book 1, Chapter 56

- 127 “Moreover, since everything happens by fate, as will be shown elsewhere, if any mortal could survey in his mind the interconnection of all causes, surely nothing would escape him. Anyone who grasped the causes of future events would necessarily grasp everything that was going to happen. Since no one but a god can do this, human beings must be left to foresee the future through certain signs that reveal what follows. For future things do not spring into existence suddenly: the passage of time is like the uncoiling of a rope, producing nothing new and unfolding each thing in its turn. This is seen both by those granted natural divination and by those who have recorded the course of events through observation. Though they do not perceive the causes themselves, they

do perceive their signs and marks. By applying memory, diligence, and the records of earlier generations to these, they produce what is called artificial divination, drawn from entrails, lightning, portents, and celestial signs.

- 128 “There is therefore no reason to marvel that diviners foresee things that exist nowhere: everything does exist, but at a distance in time. Just as seeds contain the power of the things that grow from them, so future events lie hidden in their causes. The mind, either stirred to frenzy or released in sleep, sees that these events will happen; reason or interpretation foresees them. Those who understand the risings, settings, and movements of the sun, moon, and other stars predict far in advance when each will occur. In the same way, those who have studied over a long period and recorded the course of things and the sequence of events understand what will happen—always, or, if that is difficult, usually; and if even that is not conceded, certainly sometimes. These arguments, then, and others of the same kind for the existence of divination are drawn from fate.

Book 1, Chapter 57

- 129 “Nature offers another line of reasoning, revealing how great the soul’s power is when separated from the bodily senses, as happens above all in sleep or in states of mental exaltation. For the souls of the gods perceive one another’s thoughts without eyes, ears, or tongue; hence human beings, even when silently making a wish or vow, do not doubt that the gods hear it. In the same way, human souls, either released in sleep and free of the body, or stirred to exaltation and moving freely and ardently on their own, perceive things they cannot see while mingled with the body.
- 130 “It may perhaps be difficult to extend this account of nature to the kind of divination we call artificial; nonetheless Posidonius investigates even this as far as he can. He thinks nature contains certain signs of future events. We have

learned, for instance, that every year the people of Ceos carefully observe the rising of the Dog Star and infer, as Heraclides of Pontus writes, whether the year will be healthy or pestilential. If the star appears dim and, as it were, shrouded in mist, the atmosphere is thick and dense, so that its breath will be oppressive and pestilential. But if the star appears bright and clear, it signifies that the atmosphere is light and pure, and therefore healthy.

- 131 “Democritus, however, thinks the ancients wisely instituted the inspection of sacrificial victims’ entrails: their condition and color reveal signs now of health, now of pestilence, and sometimes even of the future barrenness or fertility of the fields. If observation and experience recognized these signs arising from nature, time could have brought many more to be noticed and recorded. Thus the natural philosopher introduced in Pacuvius’ Chryses seems to have understood very little of the nature of things:

‘[...] for those who understand the language of birds,
And learn more from another’s liver than their own,
Should, I think, be heard rather than heeded.’

“Why, I ask, when a few lines later you yourself say quite clearly:

‘Whatever this is, it gives all things life and form, nourishes, increases, creates
them,

Buries and receives all things back into itself, and is the father of all;

From that same source the same things rise anew, and there they also perish.’

“Why, then, if we all have one shared home, and if human souls have always existed and always will, should they not be able to discern what follows from each thing and what signifies each event? That,” he said, “is what I had to say about divination.”

Book 1, Chapter 58

¹³² “Now let me declare this: I do not recognize people who cast lots, or those who prophesy for profit, or even those consultations with the dead that your friend Appius used to employ. In short, I put no value at all on a Marsian augur, village haruspices, astrologers from the Circus, interpreters serving Isis, or interpreters of dreams. These are diviners neither by knowledge nor by art, ‘But superstitious prophets, shameless fortune-tellers, Either lazy or insane, or driven by their poverty, Who cannot find a footpath for themselves, yet show another the road; They promise people riches, then beg a drachma from those very people. Let them deduct their drachma from those riches, and hand over the rest.’ “These are Ennius’ words: a few lines earlier he holds that gods exist, but thinks they do not care what the human race does. I, however, believe that they do care, that they warn us, and that they foretell many things; and so, once frivolity, falsehood, and fraud are excluded, I accept divination.” When Quintus had finished, I said, “You certainly came splendidly prepared [...]”

Book 2, Chapter 1

¹ As I searched, thinking long and deeply about how I might serve the greatest number of people without ever abandoning my concern for the republic, no greater service occurred to me than to open for my fellow citizens the paths to the highest learning. I believe I have already accomplished this in several books. In the book entitled *Hortensius* I urged the study of philosophy as strongly as I could; and in the four books of the *Academics* I showed what approach to philosophy I considered least presumptuous, most consistent, and most refined.

- ² Since philosophy rests on the question of the ultimate ends of good and evil, I thoroughly examined that subject in five books, making it possible to understand what each philosopher maintains and what can be said against each. Five more books followed, the *Tusculan Disputations*, which set out what is most essential to a happy life. The first concerns contempt for death, the second endurance of pain, the third the easing of grief, and the fourth the other disturbances of the mind. The fifth embraces the principle that casts the strongest light on all philosophy: it teaches that virtue is sufficient in itself for a happy life.
- ³ After publishing these works, I completed three books *On the Nature of the Gods*, containing the whole inquiry into that subject. To make that inquiry full and complete, I began these books on divination. If, as I intend, I add a work on fate, this entire question will have received more than adequate treatment. With these works should be counted the six books *On the Republic*, which I wrote when I held the helm of government. This is a great subject, belonging properly to philosophy, and treated in the fullest detail by Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and the whole Peripatetic school. And what shall I say of my *Consolation*? It certainly brings me some measure of healing, and I think it will be of great service to others too. Recently I also brought out the book *On Old Age*, addressed to our friend Atticus. And since philosophy makes a man good and courageous, my Cato deserves a foremost place among these works.

Book 2, Chapter 2

- ⁴ Since Aristotle and Theophrastus, men outstanding alike in subtlety and abundance of thought, joined instruction in speaking to philosophy, my books on oratory should, I think, be included in the same company: the three books *On the Orator*, the *Brutus* as a fourth, and the *Orator* as a fifth.

Such was my work so far. I was pressing eagerly toward what remained, resolved that, unless some graver cause intervened, no province of philosophy should remain closed, unilluminated by Latin writing. What greater or better gift can we bring the republic than to teach and educate its young people? Especially in an age, and amid moral conditions, in which they have slipped so far that everyone's strength must be enlisted to check and restrain them.

- ⁵ I do not, of course, expect to achieve what we ought not even to demand—that all young men turn to these studies. If only a few would! Even their efforts could have a wide influence in public life. Indeed, my labor brings me a reward even from those who, already advanced in years, find rest in my books. Their eagerness to read daily gives fresh impetus to my eagerness to write; and I have discovered that they are more numerous than I supposed. This too is a splendid achievement, and a glory for Romans: to have no need of Greek writings on philosophy.
- ⁶ I shall certainly achieve it if I complete what I have begun. It was the grievous downfall of our state that gave me occasion to expound philosophy. During the civil war I could neither defend the republic in my accustomed way nor remain idle, and I could discover no better occupation worthy of me. My fellow citizens will therefore pardon me—or rather thank me—that when the republic lay in one man's power, I neither hid myself away nor abandoned or crushed my spirit. I did not behave like someone angry with a man or with the times; nor, on the other hand, did I so flatter or admire another's fortune as to regret my own. Plato and philosophy had taught me this very lesson: states undergo certain natural revolutions, passing now into the hands of leading citizens, now into those of the people, and sometimes into those of a single man.
- ⁷ When this happened to our own republic, deprived of my former duties, I began to renew these studies, chiefly to lighten my mind's distress, and to serve my fellow citizens in whatever way I could. In my books I delivered opinions and addressed the people; I regarded philosophy as my substitute for the conduct of public business. Now that I have begun to be consulted about the

republic again, my efforts must be devoted to it—or rather all my thought and care must be placed there, leaving for this pursuit only such time as public duty and service allow. But more of this another time; now let us return to the discussion we began.

Book 2, Chapter 3

- ⁸ After my brother Quintus had delivered the argument on divination recorded in the preceding book, and we thought we had walked enough, we sat down in the library in the Lyceum. Then I said: “Quintus, you have defended the Stoic position with precision and in true Stoic style. And what especially delights me is your use of so many examples from our own history, striking and distinguished examples too. I must therefore answer what you have said, but in such a way that I assert nothing and question everything, generally doubting and mistrusting even myself. If I had anything certain to pronounce, I should myself be practicing divination—I who deny that divination exists.
- ⁹ “For I am troubled by the question Carneades was particularly fond of asking: what is divination about? Is it about things we perceive through our senses? But those are things we see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. Is there anything in them that foreknowledge or some agitation of the mind enables us to perceive better than our natural faculties do? Could your supposed diviner, if he were blind as Tiresias was, tell what is white and what is black? Or, if deaf, recognize differences of voices or musical modes? Divination, then, has no application to anything apprehended by the senses. Nor is it needed in matters governed by skill. When people are ill, we generally bring them doctors, not prophets or soothsayers; and those who wish to play the lyre or pipes learn to handle them from musicians, not from haruspices.

Book 2, Chapter 4

- ¹⁰ “The same holds for literature and all the other subjects that can be taught. Do you think those said to divine can tell us whether the sun is larger than the earth or merely as large as it appears? Whether the moon shines by its own light or the sun’s? What motions belong to the sun and moon, or to the five stars called wanderers? Those regarded as diviners do not profess to answer these questions, or to distinguish truth from falsehood in geometrical demonstrations. Such matters belong to mathematicians, not soothsayers.
- “And among the questions philosophy debates, is there any that a diviner habitually answers or is asked—what is good, what evil, what neither? These are the particular concerns of philosophers.
- ¹¹ “Again, does anyone consult a haruspex about duty: how to live with parents, brothers, or friends; how to use money, public office, or command? Such questions are generally referred to the wise, not to diviners. And can any of the subjects treated by logicians or natural philosophers be divined? Whether there is one universe or more than one, what the first principles of things are from which everything arises—knowledge of this belongs to natural philosophers. How to resolve the Liar, which they call the *ψευδόμενον*, or how to resist the sorites—we could, if necessary, call it the ‘heap argument’ in Latin, but there is no need: like ‘philosophy’ itself and many Greek words, ‘sorites’ is familiar enough in Latin speech—these questions too will be answered by logicians, not diviners. And when the inquiry concerns the best form of government, or which laws and customs are useful and which harmful, shall we summon haruspices from Etruria, or will our leading citizens and chosen men experienced in public affairs decide?

Book 2, Chapter 5

- ¹² “If divination has nothing to do with things subject to the senses, or things contained within the arts, or the subjects debated in philosophy, or the business of government, I cannot for the life of me understand what it does concern. It must either embrace everything or be given some subject matter within which to operate. But reason has shown that it does not embrace everything, and we can find no sphere or subject to put under its authority. Consider, then, whether there is no divination at all. There is a familiar Greek verse to this effect:
“Who guesses well is the best prophet, I declare.’
“Will a prophet, then, make a better guess at an approaching storm than a helmsman, discern the character of a disease more acutely than a doctor, or judge the conduct of a war more intelligently than a commander?
- ¹³ “But I noticed, Quintus, how carefully you separated divination both from conjectures based on skill and practical knowledge and from things apprehended through the senses or technical arts. You defined it as the prediction and foreknowledge of events that depend on chance. First, you are brought back to the same point. Doctors, helmsmen, and commanders also foresee events dependent on chance. Will a *haruspex*, an augur, a prophet, or a dreamer make a better guess that a sick man will escape his illness, a ship its danger, or an army an ambush, than a doctor, a helmsman, or a commander?
- ¹⁴ “Yet you said that even foreseeing approaching winds or rain from certain signs did not belong to the diviner—and here you recited some of my *Aratea* from memory—although these events too depend on chance: they happen generally, not always. What, then, is this foreknowledge of chance events that you call divination, and where does it operate? Whatever can be foreseen through skill, reasoning, experience, or conjecture, you assign not to diviners but to experts. It follows that the chance events open to divination are those no skill or wis-

dom can foresee. If, for example, someone had said many years in advance that the famous Marcus Marcellus, three times consul, would die in a shipwreck, he would certainly have divined the future: no other skill or wisdom could have given him that knowledge. Divination, then, is foreknowledge of events of this kind, which lie in the hands of fortune.

Book 2, Chapter 6

- ¹⁵ “Can there be foreknowledge, then, of events for whose occurrence there is no reason? What else do we mean by chance, fortune, accident, or contingency, except that something has happened or turned out in a way that might equally have been different? How, then, can what occurs at random, through blind accident and the shifting course of fortune, be foreseen and foretold?
- ¹⁶ “A doctor foresees the worsening of a disease by reasoning; a commander foresees an ambush, a helmsman storms. Yet even these men, who form no opinion without a definite reason, are often mistaken. A farmer sees the olive blossom and expects to see the fruit as well, and not without reason; yet sometimes he too is mistaken. If those who say nothing without some plausible inference and reasoning are mistaken, what are we to think of the guesses of those who foresee the future from entrails, birds, portents, oracles, or dreams? I am not yet saying how worthless these signs are—a fissure in a liver, a raven’s cry, an eagle’s flight, a shooting star, the utterances of the frenzied, lots, dreams. I shall discuss each in its own place; for now I am discussing them all together.
- ¹⁷ “How can anything be foreseen when there is neither a cause nor a sign of its future occurrence? Eclipses of the sun and moon are predicted many years ahead by those who calculate the movements of the heavenly bodies. What they predict is what nature’s necessity will bring about. From the moon’s unvarying movement they see when, opposite the sun, it will enter the earth’s shadow—the cone of night—and must therefore be darkened; and when that same

moon, passing beneath and in front of the sun, will hide its light from our eyes. They see in what constellation and at what time each wandering star will appear, and on what day a given constellation will rise or set. You can see the reasoning followed by those who predict these things.

Book 2, Chapter 7

- ¹⁸ “What reasoning guides those who say that treasure will be found or an inheritance received? Where in the nature of things is that future lodged? If these events and others of their kind possess any such necessity, what on earth can we suppose happens by accident or sheer good luck? Nothing is so opposed to reason and regularity as fortune. It seems to me that not even a god can know what will happen by chance and accident. If he knows, it will certainly happen; if it will certainly happen, there is no chance. But chance exists; therefore there is no foreknowledge of chance events.
- ¹⁹ “Or if you deny that chance exists and say that everything happening now or in the future has been determined by fate from all eternity, change your definition of divination, which you said was foreknowledge of chance events. If nothing can happen, occur, or come about except what has been certain from all eternity to happen at its appointed time, how can chance exist? And once it is abolished, what room is there for divination, which you defined as foreknowledge of chance events? Yet you also said that everything happening now or in the future is encompassed by fate. The very word ‘fate’ smacks of old wives’ tales and superstition; nevertheless, the Stoics have a great deal to say about this fate of theirs. More of that another time; for now, only what is necessary.

Book 2, Chapter 8

- 20 “If everything happens by fate, what use is divination to me? What the diviner predicts really will happen. So I do not even understand the point of the story that an eagle called our close friend Deiotarus back from his journey. Had he not returned, he would have had to sleep in the room that collapsed the following night, and would therefore have been crushed in its ruins. But if that was fated, he could not have escaped it; if not, he could not have met with that disaster. What help, then, is divination? What warning can lots or entrails or any prediction give me? If it was fated that the Roman people’s two fleets should perish in the First Punic War, one by shipwreck and the other sunk by the Carthaginians, then even if the sacred chickens had given the fullest favorable sign by feeding when Lucius Junius and Publius Claudius were consuls, the fleets would still have perished. But if the fleets would not have perished had the auspices been obeyed, they did not perish by fate. Yet you insist that everything happens by fate. There is therefore no divination.
- 21 “If it was fated that the Roman people’s army should perish at Lake Trasimene in the Second Punic War, could this have been avoided if the consul Flaminius had obeyed the signs and auspices that forbade him to fight? Certainly it could. Either, then, the army did not perish by fate, or, if it did—as you must certainly maintain—the same thing would have happened even if he had obeyed the auspices, since fate cannot be changed. Where, then, is this Stoic divination? If everything happens by fate, it can give us no warning to be more cautious: however we behave, what is going to happen will happen nonetheless. But if it can be diverted, there is no fate, and therefore no divination either, since divination concerns things that will happen. Nothing that some act of propitiation may prevent is certain to happen.

Book 2, Chapter 9

- ²² “Indeed, I do not even think knowledge of the future is useful to us. What would Priam’s life have been if he had known from youth the fate awaiting his old age? But let us leave mythology and look nearer home. In my Consolation I collected the most grievous deaths of our country’s most illustrious men. Well then, to pass over earlier examples, do you think it would have helped Marcus Crassus, at the height of his wealth and prosperity, to know that after his son Publius was killed and his army destroyed, he himself must perish beyond the Euphrates in shame and disgrace? Or do you think Gnaeus Pompey would have rejoiced in his three consulships, his three triumphs, and the glory of his immense achievements if he had known that, after losing his army, he would be butchered in a lonely place in Egypt, and that after his death things would follow that we cannot recount without tears?
- ²³ “And Caesar: if he had divined that in the very Senate whose membership he had himself largely chosen, in Pompey’s senate house, before Pompey’s own statue, with so many of his own centurions looking on, he would be butchered by citizens of the highest rank, some of whom he had heaped with every distinction, and lie there with no one—not merely no friend, but not even a slave—approaching his body, in what anguish of mind do we think he would have passed his life? Surely ignorance of future evils is more useful than knowledge.
- ²⁴ “For this can certainly not be said, especially by Stoics: ‘Pompey would not have taken up arms; Crassus would not have crossed the Euphrates; Caesar would not have undertaken civil war.’ Then their deaths were not fated; yet you insist that everything happens by fate. Divination would therefore have helped them not at all; indeed, it would have robbed their earlier lives of every delight. What joy could they have found in anything with their deaths before their minds? Whichever way the Stoics turn, all their ingenuity must collapse. If a future event can happen either this way or that, fortune has enormous power;

and chance events cannot be certain. But if what will happen in every matter and at every time is certain, how can the haruspices help me? After declaring that the most terrible things are portended,

Book 2, Chapter 10

- 25 “they add at the end that the outcome will be less severe if the proper rites are performed. Yet if nothing happens outside fate, no religious rite can lighten anything. Homer understands this when he presents Jupiter lamenting that he cannot rescue his son Sarpedon from death against fate. A Greek verse conveys the same thought:

“‘What stands ordained surpasses highest Jupiter.’

“I think the whole notion of fate is rightly mocked even in a line of Atellan farce; but in matters so serious there is no room for jokes. Let us therefore close the argument. If no chance event can be foreseen because such events cannot be certain, divination does not exist. But if they can be foreseen because they are certain and fated, again divination does not exist: you said it concerned events dependent on chance.

Book 2, Chapter 11

- 26 “But let that serve as the first skirmish of my argument, a sortie by light-armed troops. Now let us come to close quarters and see whether we can shake the wings of your battle line.

“You said there were two kinds of divination, one artificial, the other natural. Artificial divination rested partly on conjecture, partly on long observation; natural divination was something the mind seized or received from outside, from the divine source out of which all our souls have been drawn, received, or poured. Among the artificial forms you placed chiefly the work of those who

inspect entrails or predict from lightning and portents, then that of augurs and those who use signs or omens; broadly speaking, you placed every conjectural form in this class.

- ²⁷ “Natural divination, on the other hand, seemed to you either to emerge and pour forth, as it were, from an excited mind, or to arise as foresight in a sleeping mind free of sensations and cares. You derived all divination from three sources: god, fate, and nature. Yet, unable to explain anything, you fought your case with an astonishing abundance of fabricated examples. My first comment on this is that I do not consider it a philosopher’s business to rely on witnesses whose truth may be accidental or whose falsehood may be maliciously invented. Arguments and reasoning should establish why each thing is so, not reported events, especially events I am entitled not to believe.

Book 2, Chapter 12

- ²⁸ “Let me begin with haruspicy, which I think should be maintained for the sake of the republic and our shared religion. But we are alone; we may search for truth without provoking ill will, especially I, who doubt so much. Let us first examine entrails, if you please. Can anyone be persuaded that the haruspices learned by long observation the things entrails are said to signify? How long was that observation? Over what span of time could it have been made? How did they compare their findings to establish which part was hostile and which favorable, which fissure pointed to danger and which to some advantage? Did Etruscan, Elean, Egyptian, and Carthaginian haruspices exchange these observations? Apart from being impossible, it is scarcely even conceivable: we see different peoples interpreting entrails in different ways, with no single discipline common to all.

- 29 “And certainly, if entrails possess some power to reveal the future, that power must either be bound up with the nature of things or be somehow shaped by the will and divine force of the gods. What can the nature of things, so vast and splendid, extending through every region and movement, have in common—I will not say with a chicken’s gall, although some call these the most revealing entrails of all—but with the liver, heart, or lung of a fattened bull? What natural property do these possess that can reveal what is going to happen?”

Book 2, Chapter 13

- 30 “Democritus, however, talks nonsense with some ingenuity, as befits a natural philosopher—a breed unsurpassed in arrogance:
“No one looks at what lies at his feet; they search the tracts of heaven.”
“Still, he thinks the condition and color of entrails reveal only this: the kind of pasture, and the abundance or scarcity of what the earth produces. He also thinks entrails indicate healthy conditions or pestilence. Happy mortal! I am quite sure he never lacked amusement. Could this man have delighted so deeply in such nonsense that he failed to see it would become plausible only if the entrails of all animals changed at the same time to the same condition and color? But if at the very same hour one animal’s liver is smooth and full and another’s rough and shriveled, what can the condition and color of entrails reveal?”
- 31 “Or is this like the story you told about Pherecydes, who saw water drawn from a well and said an earthquake was coming? It is not shameless enough, I suppose, for these men to venture an explanation of the force that caused an earthquake after it has happened: must they also foresee one from the color of spring water? Many such things are said in the schools; but consider whether you really need to believe them all.

- 32 “Yet let these notions of Democritus be true. When do we inquire into such things through entrails? When have we ever heard anything of the kind from a haruspex after he inspected them? They warn of dangers from water or fire; they announce inheritances or losses. They discuss the favorable fissure and the vital fissure; they scrutinize the liver’s head-lobe most carefully from every side. And if it cannot be found, they think nothing more dreadful could have happened.

Book 2, Chapter 14

- 33 “Certainly these things could not have been established by observation, as I showed above. They are therefore inventions of a system, not discoveries of antiquity—if there can be a system concerning things unknown. But what kinship do they have with the nature of things? Grant that nature is bound together in a single harmony and forms a continuous whole, as I see natural philosophers believe, especially those who have declared that everything that exists is one: what connection can the universe have with the discovery of treasure? If entrails show that my money will increase, and nature brings this about, then first the entrails are linked to the universe, and next my gain is contained in the nature of things. Are natural philosophers not ashamed to say this? Let there indeed be some interaction within nature—I grant that there is. The Stoics collect many instances: the little livers of mice are said to grow at the winter solstice; dried pennyroyal to bloom on the very day of that solstice; inflated bladders to burst; and the seeds enclosed in the centers of apples to turn in opposite directions. Again, when some strings of a lyre are struck, others resonate; oysters and all shellfish increase and diminish with the moon; and trees are thought best felled in winter when the moon is also waning, because they are then dry.

Book 2, Chapter 15

- ³⁴ “Why say more about straits or the ocean tides, whose ebb and flow are governed by the moon’s movement? Six hundred examples of this sort could be produced to show the natural kinship of things far apart. Let us grant this; it does not conflict with the present argument. But does a fissure of a particular kind in a liver also signify profit? By what bond of nature, by what harmony and accord, which the Greeks call *συμπάθειαν*, can a fissure in a liver agree with my little gain, or my petty profit with heaven, earth, and the nature of things? I will grant even this, if you wish, although I shall have surrendered a great part of my case by allowing any correspondence between nature and entrails.
- ³⁵ “But even granted that, how does someone seeking favorable signs come to sacrifice a victim suited to his own circumstances? This was what I thought could not be answered. Yet how prettily it is answered! I am ashamed—not for you, whose powers of memory I admire, but for Chrysippus, Antipater, and Posidonius. They say just what you said: some conscious, divine power, diffused throughout the universe, guides the choice of the victim. Better still is that other claim, used by you and made by them: when someone intends to sacrifice, the entrails change, so that something is missing or something is added. Everything, they say, obeys the will of the gods.

Book 2, Chapter 16

- ³⁶ “Believe me, not even little old women believe this anymore. Do you think that if one man chooses a particular calf he will find a liver without a head-lobe, but if another chooses it, the head-lobe will be there? Can this lobe suddenly disappear or appear so that the entrails adapt themselves to the sacrificer’s fortune? Do you not see that choosing victims is a kind of gamble, especially when expe-

rience itself proves it? For after entrails have been found without a head-lobe—the most dreadful sign imaginable—the very next victim often yields the most splendidly favorable sacrifice. Where, then, are the threats of the earlier entrails? How were the gods so thoroughly appeased so suddenly?

“But you report that when Caesar sacrificed a fattened bull, no heart was found among its entrails. Since the victim could not have lived without a heart, you conclude that the heart perished at the moment of sacrifice.

- 37 “How is it that you understand one thing—that an ox could not have lived without a heart—but fail to see the other—that its heart could not suddenly have flown off somewhere? I might either be ignorant of the heart’s importance to life, or suspect that some disease had shrunk the ox’s heart, leaving it thin, tiny, withered, and unlike a heart. But what ground have you for thinking that, if a heart had been present in the fattened bull a moment before, it suddenly vanished in the very act of sacrifice? Did the bull lose its heart because it caught sight of the witless Caesar in his purple robes? Believe me, you betray the city of philosophy while defending its outposts. In insisting on the truth of haruspicy you overthrow the whole science of nature. There is a head-lobe in the liver, a heart among the entrails: the instant you sprinkle the sacrificial meal and wine, it will disappear. A god will snatch it away; some force will destroy or devour it. Nature, then, will not govern the birth and death of everything; something will arise from nothing or suddenly perish into nothing. What natural philosopher ever said that? The haruspices say it. Do you therefore think them more worthy of belief than natural philosophers?

Book 2, Chapter 17

- 38 “And when sacrifices are made to several gods, how does it happen that some accept them and others do not? What fickleness is this in the gods, threatening through the first entrails and promising well through the second? Or what great discord is there among them, often even among the closest relatives, that

Apollo's entrails are favorable and Diana's unfavorable? What could be clearer than that, since victims are brought forward at random, each man's entrails will match whatever victim he happens to receive? 'But,' you say, 'there is something divine in the very choice of the victim that falls to each man, just as in the lot each man draws.' More about lots shortly. You do not strengthen the case for victims by comparing them to lots; you weaken the case for lots by comparing them to victims.

39 "When we send someone to the Aequimaesium to bring a lamb for sacrifice, is the lamb brought to me one whose entrails fit my circumstances? Is the slave led to that lamb not by chance but by a god? If you say that chance here too is a kind of lot joined to the gods' will, I am sorry that our Stoic friends have given the Epicureans so much opportunity to laugh at them. You know very well how they ridicule these notions.

40 "And they can do so all the more easily. Epicurus introduced his very gods as a joke: transparent, open to every breeze, dwelling between two worlds as though between two groves, for fear of falling ruins. He thinks they have the same limbs as we do but make no use of them. Thus, abolishing the gods by this roundabout route, he quite consistently has no hesitation about abolishing divination. But the Stoics do not share his consistency. His god, having no business either of his own or anyone else's, cannot bestow divination on human beings. Your god, however, can withhold it and still govern the universe and care for humanity no less.

41 "Why, then, do you entangle yourselves in snares you can never undo? When in a particular hurry, they habitually conclude like this: 'If there are gods, there is divination; but there are gods; therefore there is divination.' Much more plausible is: 'But there is no divination; therefore there are no gods.' See how rashly they risk the consequence that, if divination does not exist, neither do the gods. Divination is plainly refuted; the existence of the gods must be upheld.

Book 2, Chapter 18

⁴² “Once this divination from entrails is abolished, all haruspicy is abolished. Portents and lightning come next. Long observation is said to carry weight in the case of lightning; for portents, reasoning and conjecture are generally employed. What, then, has been observed about lightning? The Etruscans divided the sky into sixteen regions. That was easy enough: double our four divisions, then double them again, so as to say from which region a thunderbolt had come. First, what difference does that make? Next, what does it signify? Is it not clear that people’s first astonishment, their terror at thunder and thunderbolts, made them believe these were the work of Jupiter, the supreme ruler of all things? That is why our records contain the rule: ‘When Jupiter thunders or lightens, it is forbidden to hold an assembly of the people.’

Book 2, Chapter 19

⁴³ “This rule may have been established for political reasons: they wanted grounds for not holding assemblies. Accordingly, a thunderbolt invalidates only assemblies, whereas in all other matters we regard it as the best possible auspice if it comes from the left. But auspices belong elsewhere; for now, lightning.

“What could be less appropriate for natural philosophers than to say that uncertain things signify anything certain? I do not suppose you are a man who believes the Cyclopes forged Jupiter’s thunderbolt on Etna.

⁴⁴ “For then it would be astonishing how Jupiter could throw it so often when he had only one. Nor would he use thunderbolts to warn people what to do or avoid. The Stoics hold that cold exhalations from the earth become winds when they begin to flow; when they enter a cloud and start splitting and tearing its thinnest parts, and do this more frequently and violently, flashes and thun-

der arise. If heat forced out by the collision of clouds bursts forth, that is a thunderbolt. Do we seek a sign of coming events in something we see produced by natural force, without regularity or any fixed time? Of course, if Jupiter were giving these signs, he would send so many thunderbolts to no purpose!

Book 2, Chapter 20

45 “What does he accomplish by hurling a thunderbolt into the open sea? Or onto the highest mountains, as usually happens? Or into deserted wildernesses? Or onto the shores of peoples who do not even observe these things?

“But the head was found in the Tiber.’ As though I denied these men had a system of some kind! What I deny is divination. The division of the sky I mentioned earlier, and the recording of particular observations, tell us where the thunderbolt came from and where it went. No reasoning tells us what it signifies. But you press me with my own verses:

“For the Father, thundering high, enthroned on starry Olympus,
Himself once struck his own hills and temples,
And hurled his fires upon the Capitol’s shrines.’

“Then Natta’s statue, then images of the gods, and Romulus and Remus with the beast that nursed them, were struck by a thunderbolt and fell; and the haruspices gave responses about these things that proved entirely true.

46 “What is astonishing is that at the very time when evidence of the conspiracy was being given in the Senate, the statue of Jupiter was being set up on the Capitol, two years after it had been commissioned. Will you really bring yourself?—this was how you pressed me—‘to defend that case against your own actions and writings?’ You are my brother; that makes me hesitate. Yet what is really troubling you here? The nature of the case, or my desire to uncover the truth? I make no counterclaim; I ask you for an explanation of the whole art of haruspicy. But you have slipped into a marvelous hiding place. You understood that you would be hard pressed when I demanded the causes of each form of

divination, and so you spent many words insisting that, since you saw the facts, you did not ask for a reason or a cause: what happened was relevant, not why. As though I conceded that these things happened, or as though it were a philosopher's business not to inquire into the cause

Book 2, Chapter 21

⁴⁷ “of each occurrence! At that point you also recited my Prognostics and mentioned kinds of plants, scammony and aristolochia root, whose causes you did not know but whose power and effect you could see. The cases are wholly different. Both Boethus the Stoic, whom you named, and our friend Posidonius have investigated the causes of weather signs; and even if the causes of those phenomena were not discovered, the phenomena themselves could still have been observed and noted. But what long-standing observation concerns Natta's statue or the bronze tablets of the laws being struck from heaven? The Pinarii Nattae are nobles; therefore danger threatens from the nobility. How cunningly Jupiter thought that out! The infant Romulus was struck by lightning; therefore danger is indicated for the city he founded. How skillfully Jupiter informs us through signs! ‘But Jupiter's statue was being set up at the very time the conspiracy was being disclosed.’ Naturally, you prefer to think this happened through the will of the gods rather than by chance. And the contractor who took the contract for that column from Cotta and Torquatus was delayed not by laziness or lack of funds, but was held back until that very hour by the immortal gods.

⁴⁸ “I do not entirely abandon the possibility that these things are true; but I do not know, and I wish to learn from you. When I suggested that some events seemed to turn out by chance as diviners had foretold, you said much about chance: a Venus throw could occur by chance in a cast of four knucklebones, but a hundred Venus throws could not occur by chance with four hundred knucklebones. First, I do not see why not; but I will not dispute it, since you

have analogies in abundance. You have your splashing of pigments, your pig's snout, and a great many others. You also say Carneades invented the story of the little Pan's head, as though it could not have occurred by chance, and as though every block of marble did not necessarily contain even heads worthy of Praxiteles! Those very heads are made by removing material; Praxiteles brings nothing into the stone. But when much has been removed and the features of the face have been reached, you recognize that what now stands polished was inside all along.

Book 2, Chapter 22

⁴⁹ “Something of that kind, then, could have appeared spontaneously in the quarries of Chios. But suppose the story invented. Have you never noticed the shape of a lion or a centaur in the clouds? Chance, then, can imitate reality, as you were just denying.

“But since we have discussed entrails and lightning enough, portents remain if we are to cover the whole of haruspicy. You brought forward a mule giving birth. An astonishing event, because it happens seldom; but if it could not happen, it would not have happened. Let this principle apply to every portent: nothing that could not happen has ever happened; and if it could happen, there is no need for wonder. Ignorance of causes produces wonder at an unfamiliar event. The same ignorance in familiar matters causes no wonder. Someone who marvels at a mule giving birth does not know how a mare gives birth, or indeed what natural process brings about the birth of any living creature. What he sees often he does not marvel at, even if he does not know why it happens; what he has never seen before, if it happens, he considers a portent. At which point, then, is there a portent: when the mule conceives, or when it gives birth?

Book 2, Chapter 23

- 50 “Conception may be contrary to nature, but birth is almost inevitable. “But why say more? Let us look at the origin of haruspicy; that will be the easiest way to judge its authority. A certain Tages is said to have suddenly emerged in the territory of Tarquinii when a field was being plowed and the furrow had been cut unusually deep, and to have spoken to the plowman. According to the Etruscan books, this Tages appeared in the form of a child but possessed the wisdom of an old man. The ox-driver, stunned by the sight, gave a loud cry of astonishment. A crowd gathered, and soon all Etruria had assembled on the spot. Tages then spoke at length before many listeners, who took down all his words and committed them to writing. His entire discourse contained the discipline of haruspicy. This was later expanded as new facts were learned and referred back to those same principles. This is the account we have received from the Etruscans themselves; this is what their writings preserve; this is the wellspring of their discipline.

Book 2, Chapter 24

- 51 “Do we need Carneades to refute this? Or Epicurus? Is anyone so foolish as to believe that someone was plowed up—shall I call him god or man? If a god, why had he hidden himself underground, contrary to nature, to see daylight only when a plow uncovered him? Could this same god not have taught his discipline to human beings from a higher station? But if Tages was a man, how could he live buried under the earth? And where could he himself have learned what he taught others? Yet I am more foolish than the believers themselves, spending so long arguing against them.

“That old remark of Cato’s is very shrewd: he used to say he wondered how one haruspex could see another without laughing.

52 “How few of their predictions ever come true! And if something does come true, what reason can be offered why it should not have happened by chance? When Hannibal, then an exile at his court, urged a decisive battle, King Prusias said he dared not fight because the entrails forbade it. ‘What is that you say?’ Hannibal asked. ‘Would you rather trust a little piece of veal than a veteran commander?’ And Caesar himself: when a leading haruspex warned him not to cross to Africa before the winter solstice, did he not cross? Had he not done so, all his enemies’ forces would have gathered in one place. Why should I list the responses of haruspices—I could give countless examples—that either went unfulfilled or had the opposite outcome?

53 “In this civil war, immortal gods, how often they deceived us! What responses of the haruspices were sent from Rome to us in Greece! What predictions were made to Pompey! He was deeply influenced by entrails and portents. I have no wish to recall them, nor is it necessary, especially for you, who were there. Yet you see that almost everything turned out contrary to their pronouncements. But enough of this; let us now turn to portents.

Book 2, Chapter 25

54 “You recited many events I myself recorded during my consulship. You brought forward many events collected by Sisenna from before the Marsic War, and many recorded by Callisthenes before the Spartans’ disastrous battle at Leuctra. I shall discuss these individually as far as seems appropriate; but we must also speak of them as a whole. What is this signaling from the gods, this announcement, as it were, of calamities? What do the immortal gods intend, first by giving signs we cannot understand without interpreters, and then by giving signs of things we cannot avoid? Even decent human beings do not do this: they do

not foretell to friends impending disasters from which those friends have no possible escape. Doctors, for example, though they often understand the truth, never tell the sick that their illness will kill them. A prediction of evil is approved only when it is accompanied by a means of avoiding it.

Book 2, Chapter 26

- 55 “What help, then, did portents or their interpreters bring either the Spartans long ago or our own people recently? If these are to be considered signs from the gods, why were they so obscure? If the gods meant us to understand what would happen, they should have declared it plainly; if they did not want it known, they should not have declared it even obscurely.

“Moreover, all the conjecture on which divination rests is often pulled by human ingenuity in many different, even opposite directions. In trials, the prosecutor makes one conjecture and the defense another, yet both are credible. So too in all matters that seem to be investigated by conjecture, arguments can be found on either side. Events are brought about sometimes by nature, sometimes by chance; sometimes resemblance itself produces an illusion. It is great folly to make the gods responsible for these things instead of seeking their causes.

- 56 “You believe that the Boeotian prophets at Lebadea saw in the crowing of roosters that victory would belong to Thebes, because defeated cocks generally fall silent and victorious ones crow. Was Jupiter giving so great a city its sign through barnyard fowl? Do those birds never crow unless they have won? ‘But then they were crowing without having won. That,’ you will say, ‘is the portent.’ A mighty one indeed! As though fish had crowed, not roosters! What hour of night or day is there when they do not crow? If victory rouses them to crow through excitement and a kind of joy, some other joy could also have arisen to prompt their crowing.

- 57 “Democritus explains in excellent language why roosters crow before dawn: once food has passed from the breast, been distributed through the whole body, and softened, they give voice, satisfied with their rest. As Ennius says, ‘in the silence of night’ they
“[...] cheer with ruddy throats,
And beat their wings with crowing and clapping.’
“Since this creature is naturally so vocal, what possessed Callisthenes to say the gods gave the roosters a signal to crow, when either nature or chance could have brought it about?

Book 2, Chapter 27

- 58 “The Senate was told that it had rained blood, that even the River Atratus had run with blood, and that statues of the gods had sweated. Do you think Thales, Anaxagoras, or any natural philosopher would have believed those reports? Neither blood nor sweat can come from anything but a body. But some discoloration caused by a substance from the earth can closely resemble blood; and moisture settling from outside, as we see on plaster walls when the south wind blows, appears to imitate sweat. In wartime frightened people see these things more often and on a greater scale; in peace the same things attract less notice. There is this further point: amid fear and danger, such stories are both more readily believed and more safely invented.
- 59 “Are we so frivolous and thoughtless that if mice gnaw something—the one occupation of their lives—we think it a prodigy? You said that before the Marsic War mice had gnawed shields at Lanuvium, and the haruspices pronounced it an immense portent. As though it mattered whether mice, gnawing something day and night, chewed shields or sieves! If we follow that reasoning, when mice recently gnawed Plato’s *Republic* in my house, I should have trembled for the republic. Or if they had gnawed Epicurus’s book *On Pleasure*, I should have thought food prices at the market were going to rise.

Book 2, Chapter 28

- ⁶⁰ “Should we really be frightened when some monstrous birth is reported among animals or human beings? To avoid going on too long, one explanation covers them all. Whatever comes into being, whatever its form, must have a natural cause. Even if it arises outside the customary course, it cannot arise outside nature. Seek the cause, then, of an unfamiliar and astonishing event, if you can. If you find none, still hold this for certain: nothing could have happened without a cause. Use reasoned understanding of nature to dispel the terror that the event’s strangeness has brought you. Then neither the earth’s rumbling nor the splitting of the sky, neither a rain of stones or blood, nor a shooting star or torchlike lights in the sky, will frighten you.
- ⁶¹ “If I ask Chrysippus the causes of all these things, that very champion of divination will never say they happened by accident; he will give a natural explanation of them all. Nothing can happen without a cause; nothing happens that cannot happen; and if something has happened that could happen, it ought not to be considered a portent. There are therefore no portents. If what happens rarely is to count as a portent, a wise man is a portent: I believe a mule has given birth more often than a wise man has existed. The argument therefore reaches this conclusion: nothing that could not happen has ever happened, and nothing that could happen is a portent. Thus there is no portent at all.

Book 2, Chapter 29

- ⁶² “A certain interpreter and expounder of portents is also said to have given a shrewd answer to a man who reported, as a portent, that a snake had coiled around a bar in his house. ‘It would be a portent,’ he said, ‘if the bar had coiled

around the snake.’ By this reply he made it clear enough that nothing capable of happening should be regarded as a portent.

“Gaius Gracchus wrote to Marcus Pomponius that his father summoned the haruspices when two snakes were caught in his house. Why snakes rather than lizards or mice? Because the latter are everyday creatures and snakes are not—as though, when something can happen, it mattered how often it happens. Still, I wonder: if releasing the female snake meant death for Tiberius Gracchus, while releasing the male was fatal to Cornelia, why did he release either? Gaius never writes what the haruspices said would happen if neither snake was released. ‘But death did follow for Gracchus.’ Through some rather serious illness, I imagine, not through the release of a snake. The haruspices are not so unlucky that even by chance nothing they predict ever happens.

Book 2, Chapter 30

- ⁶³ “I should marvel at the story you told from Homer, if I believed it: that Calchas divined the years of the Trojan War from the number of sparrows. About his conjecture Agamemnon speaks as follows in Homer, in a version I made at leisure:

“Endure, men, and bear hard labors in your hearts,
So we may learn whether the prophecies of Calchas,
Our augur, prove his heart’s intuitions true or empty.
For all retain that portent in their memory
Who have not left the light through deadly fate.
When first Aulis was clothed in Argive fleets
That bore destruction to Priam and ruin to Troy,
Beside cool waters, at the smoking altars,
We soothed the gods with bulls whose horns were gold,
Beneath a shading plane tree, where a spring flowed out.
We saw a serpent, huge in form and coils,

Terrible, dart from the altar at Jupiter's urging.
It seized the fledglings on a plane-tree bough,
Sheltered beneath the leaves; as it devoured the eight,
Their mother, ninth, flew overhead with trembling cries.
The savage tore her entrails with its monstrous bite.

- 64 “When it had killed those tender birds and their mother,
The selfsame Father, Saturn's son, who brought it to the light,
Concealed it, shaping it in a hard sheath of stone.
We stood in fear and watched that marvelous prodigy
Unfold amid the altars of the gods.
Then Calchas spoke these words in a confident voice:
“Why, Achaeans, are you suddenly numb with wonder?
The father of the gods himself has given us these signs,
Slow, far too late in fulfillment, but of everlasting fame and praise.
For as many birds as you see slaughtered by those foul teeth,
So many years of war shall we endure at Troy.
In the tenth it will fall and sate the Achaeans with vengeance.”
So Calchas spoke; and now you see those things fulfilled.’

- 65 “What sort of augury is this, taking sparrows to signify years rather than months or days? Why does he base his conjecture on little sparrows, in which there was no prodigy, and say nothing of the serpent, which is said to have turned to stone—something that could not happen? Finally, what resemblance does a sparrow bear to years? As for the snake that appeared to Sulla while he was sacrificing, I remember both things: that Sulla sacrificed when about to lead out his army, and that a snake emerged from the altar. That day's success was due not to the haruspex's counsel but to the commander's.

Book 2, Chapter 31

⁶⁶ “These sorts of portents contain nothing astonishing. After they occur, some interpretation is applied to turn them into a conjecture. Thus the grains of wheat heaped into the infant Midas’s mouth, or the bees you said settled on Plato’s lips as a child, are less remarkable as events than as prettily interpreted stories. Yet the stories themselves may be false, or the things predicted may have come about by chance. In Roscius’s own case it may be false that a snake was wound around him; but that a snake was in his cradle is not so astonishing, especially at Solonium, where snakes regularly hold their markets by the hearth. As for the haruspices’ response that no one would be more famous or distinguished than he, I wonder that the immortal gods foretold glory for a future actor, but none for Africanus.

⁶⁷ “You also collected the portents concerning Flaminius: that he and his horse suddenly fell—surely nothing astonishing in that!—and that the standard of the first company of spearmen could not be pulled out. Perhaps the standard-bearer was timidly pulling at what he had firmly planted. And what was so astonishing about Dionysius’s horse emerging from the river with bees in its mane? But because he began his reign soon afterward, a chance occurrence acquired the force of a portent. ‘But at Sparta weapons rang out in Hercules’ sanctuary; at Thebes the closed doors of the same god’s temple suddenly opened, and shields fixed high up were found on the ground.’ Since none of these things could have happened without some movement, why should we say they were caused by divine power rather than chance?

Book 2, Chapter 32

- ⁶⁸ “But on the head of Lysander’s statue at Delphi a wreath of rough weeds appeared, and suddenly too.’ Really? Do you think the wreath appeared before the seeds had taken root? The rough weeds, I suppose, came from seeds carried by birds, not planted by people. Besides, anything on a head can look like a wreath. As for your story that the golden stars dedicated to Castor and Pollux at Delphi fell at the same time and could never be found, that looks more like the work of thieves than gods.
- ⁶⁹ “I am truly amazed that the mischief of the monkey at Dodona has been committed to Greek histories. What could be less astonishing than that this hideous beast overturned an urn and scattered the lots? Yet the historians declare that no more dreadful portent ever befell the Spartans! Then there were the predictions made at Veii: if Lake Alban overflowed and its water reached the sea, Rome would perish; if it was held back, Veii [...] Thus the Alban water was diverted for the benefit of farmland near the city, not to preserve its citadel and the city itself. ‘But a little later a voice was heard warning them to take precautions against Rome’s capture by the Gauls. Hence an altar was dedicated on the New Street to Aius Loquens, the Speaker.’ What then? When no one knew him, this Aius Loquens spoke and talked, earning his name thereby; but after acquiring a shrine, an altar, and a name, did he fall silent? The same may be said of Moneta, the Warner: apart from the pregnant sow, what has she ever warned us about?

Book 2, Chapter 33

⁷⁰ “Enough about portents. Auspices remain, and those lots that are drawn—not the pronouncements poured forth in prophecy, which we more properly call oracles. We shall discuss those when we reach natural divination. The Chaldeans also remain; but first let us examine auspices. A difficult subject for an augur to argue against! For a Marsian augur, perhaps, but for a Roman a very easy one. We Roman augurs are not men who predict the future by observing birds and other signs. Still, I believe that Romulus, who founded the city under auspices, thought augury offered knowledge for foreseeing events. Antiquity was mistaken in many things. That belief, we see, has now been changed by experience, learning, or the passage of time. Yet custom, religious observance, discipline, augural law, and the authority of our college are maintained both out of regard for popular opinion and for the great advantages they bring the republic.

Book 2, Chapter 34

⁷¹ “Indeed, the consuls Publius Claudius and Lucius Junius, who sailed against the auspices, deserved every punishment. Religious observance should have been obeyed; ancestral custom should not have been rejected with such defiance. Rightly, then, one was condemned by the people’s judgment, while the other took his own life. Flaminius disobeyed the auspices, and so perished with his army. But the following year Paulus obeyed them: did that keep him from falling with his army in the battle of Cannae? Even if auspices existed—and they do not—those we use, whether from the sacred birds’ feeding or from the sky, are certainly imitations of auspices, not auspices at all. ‘Quintus Fabius, I wish you to assist me in taking the auspices.’ He answers: ‘I have heard.’ In our

ancestors' time an expert was employed for this; now anyone will do. Yet an expert is needed, someone who understands what 'silence' means. In taking auspices, we call a condition free of every flaw 'silence.'

- 72 "Understanding this requires a fully trained augur. But when the man taking the auspices orders his assistant, 'Tell me if there appears to be silence,' the assistant neither looks up nor looks around; he immediately replies that there appears to be silence. Then the other says: 'Tell me if they are feeding.' 'They are feeding.' What birds? Where? 'The man called the chicken-keeper from that very duty has brought chickens in a cage.' These, then, are Jupiter's winged messengers! What does it matter whether they feed or not? Nothing, so far as auspices go. But when they feed, something must fall from their mouths and strike the earth—first called terripavium, then terripudium, and now tripudium. So when a morsel falls from a chicken's mouth, the person taking the auspices is informed of a tripudium solistimum, a fully favorable feeding sign.

Book 2, Chapter 35

- 73 "Can an auspice so forced and wrung out contain anything divine? That the earliest augurs did not use it is shown by an ancient decree of our college, which states that any bird can give the tripudium. Then it would be an auspice if the bird revealed itself—provided it were free to do so. Then that bird might seem Jupiter's interpreter and attendant. But now, caged and starved, it rushes at a lump of porridge, and if something drops from its mouth, do you think this an auspice, or imagine Romulus used to take auspices in this way?
- 74 "And do you not think that those taking the auspices used to watch the sky themselves? Now they give orders to the chicken-keeper, and he makes the report. We regard a thunderbolt on the left as the best auspice for everything except assemblies. This exception was established for political reasons, so that the state's leading men should have authority to interpret the conditions for

assemblies, whether for trials before the people, the passage of laws, or the election of magistrates. ‘But on receipt of Tiberius Gracchus’s letter, the consuls Scipio and Figulus resigned their office when the augurs ruled that their election was flawed.’ Who denies that augury has a discipline? I deny its power of divination. ‘But the haruspices are diviners. When Tiberius Gracchus brought them into the Senate because of the sudden death of the man who collapsed while reporting the vote of the first voting century, they said the officer conducting the vote was not duly appointed.’

- 75 “First consider whether they meant the man who had been polling the century: he was the one who died, and they could have said that by conjecture without divination. Next, perhaps they spoke by chance, which can never be excluded from this kind of matter. What could Etruscan haruspices know about the proper taking of an augur’s observation post or the law of the city’s sacred boundary? I agree with Gaius Marcellus rather than Appius Claudius—both were my colleagues—and think that although augural law was originally established through belief in divination, it was afterward preserved and maintained for the republic’s sake.

Book 2, Chapter 36

- 76 “But I have said more on this subject elsewhere; for now, enough. Let us examine foreign auguries, which are less a matter of skill than of superstition. They use almost every bird; we use very few. Different signs are favorable for them and for our augurs. Deiotarus used to ask me about our system of augury, and I would ask him about his. Immortal gods, what a difference there was! Some points were even contradictory. He always used his system; how much do we use ours, except while holding the auspices received from the people? Our ancestors would not allow warfare to be conducted without taking auspices; yet for how many years have wars been conducted by proconsuls and propraetors, who do not possess the auspices!

77 “Accordingly, they neither cross rivers under auspices nor take auspices from the birds’ feeding. Where, then, is divination from birds? Since wars are conducted by those who have no auspices, it seems to have been retained for civil affairs and removed from military ones. As for signs from spearheads, an entirely military form of auspice, the famous Marcus Marcellus, five times consul, abandoned it altogether—a man outstanding both as commander and as augur. Indeed, he used to say that whenever he wanted to undertake some business without being hindered by the auspices, he would travel in a covered litter. Similar is the instruction we augurs give: to prevent an adverse sign from yoked animals, order the beasts to be unyoked.

Book 2, Chapter 37

78 “What does refusing Jupiter’s warning amount to, except arranging either that an auspice cannot occur or that, if it does, it cannot be seen?

“Then there is your utterly ridiculous claim that Deiotarus feels no regret for the auspices he received when he was setting out to join Pompey, because he followed his allegiance and friendship with the Roman people and did his duty: honor and glory, he said, came before his kingdom and possessions. I readily believe it; but it has nothing to do with auspices. A crow could not have sung to him that he was acting rightly in preparing to defend the liberty of the Roman people. That was his own conviction, as indeed it proved to be.

79 “Birds signify favorable or unfavorable outcomes. Deiotarus, I see, took his auspices from virtue, which forbids us to look to fortune so long as we remain faithful. But if the birds promised favorable outcomes, they certainly deceived him. He fled the battlefield with Pompey: a bitter hour! He parted from him: a sorrowful business! He saw Caesar as enemy and guest at once: what could be more painful? Caesar stripped him of the tetrarchy of the Trocmi and gave it to some Pergamene hanger-on of his, and took from him as well the Armenia the senate had granted him. After receiving the most magnificent hospitality at his

hands, Caesar left his host, a king, despoiled. But I am straying too far; let me return to the point. If we ask about outcomes, which is what we consult birds for, Deiotarus's were in no way favorable; if we ask about duties, he learned them from his own virtue, not from auspices.

Book 2, Chapter 38

80 “Set aside, then, Romulus’s augural staff, which you say could not be burned even in a tremendous fire; dismiss Attus Navius’s whetstone. Invented fables should have no place in philosophy. A philosopher should instead have examined, first, the very nature of the whole practice of augury, then its discovery, then its consistency. What natural power makes birds wandering at random here and there signify anything, now forbidding action and now commanding it by their song or flight? Why were some birds empowered to make an auspice valid from the left, others from the right? How, when, and by whom shall we say these things were discovered? The Etruscans, at least, have a boy plowed up from the earth as the founder of their discipline. Whom have we? Attus Navius? But Romulus and Remus lived some years earlier, both augurs, as we are told. Or shall we call these discoveries Pisidian, Cilician, or Phrygian? Are we content, then, to take as our authorities on the divine people untouched by civilization?

Book 2, Chapter 39

81 “‘But all kings, peoples, and nations use auspices.’ As though anything were so widespread as foolishness! As though you yourself accepted the multitude’s judgment! How few deny that pleasure is a good! Most even call it the highest good. Do their numbers drive the Stoics from their position? Or does the mul-

itude follow Stoic authority in most matters? What wonder, then, if feeble minds take in these superstitions about auspices and divination of every kind, but cannot discern the truth?

82 “And where is the agreement, the united consistency, among augurs? Ennius, following our own augural practice, wrote:

“‘Then thunder sounded favorably on the left, in a clear sky.’

“But Homer’s Ajax, complaining to Achilles of the Trojans’ ferocity, says something like this:

“‘Jupiter shows them favor with his lightning on the right.’

“So we regard the left as better, the Greeks and foreign peoples the right. I am well aware that we call favorable signs ‘left-hand’ even when they come from the right. Still, our people chose the name ‘left,’ and foreigners ‘right,’ because that side generally seemed the better one.

Book 2, Chapter 40

83 “What an immense disagreement! And when they use different birds and different signs, observe them differently and give different answers, must we not admit that some of these practices were adopted in error, some through superstition, and many through fraud?

“To these superstitions you did not hesitate to add spoken omens: Aemilia telling Paullus that Persa was dead, which her father accepted as an omen; Caecilia surrendering her seat to her sister’s daughter. Then those familiar instances: ‘Speak only favorable words,’ and the voting century chosen to vote first, the omen for the election. This is precisely what it means to plead eloquently and at length against yourself. When will you ever have a peaceful, unfettered mind if you attend to such things, taking superstition rather than reason as your guide to action? Really? If someone, speaking about his own affairs, happens to use a word that fits something you are doing or thinking about, is that to fill you with fear or lift your spirits?

Book 2, Chapter 41

⁸⁴ “When Marcus Crassus was embarking his army at Brundisium, a man in the harbor selling dried figs imported from Caunus kept shouting, ‘Cauneas—Caunian figs!’ Let us say, if you like, that he was warning Crassus, ‘Cave ne eas—beware of going!’ and that Crassus would not have perished had he obeyed the omen. If we accept such things, we shall have to watch for a stubbed toe, a broken sandal strap, and sneezes.

“Lots and the Chaldeans remain, before we come to inspired prophets and dreams.

⁸⁵ “Do you really think we need to discuss lots? What is drawing a lot, after all? Almost the same as playing the finger-guessing game, throwing knucklebones, or casting dice: in these things rash chance, not reason or deliberation, holds sway. The whole business was invented for deception, whether for profit, superstition, or delusion. As we did with divination from entrails, let us examine the traditional origin of the most celebrated lots. The records of Praeneste tell us that Numerius Suffustius, a respectable man of noble birth, was repeatedly commanded in dreams—finally with threats—to split a flint rock in a particular place. Terrified by these visions, he set about it despite his fellow citizens’ ridicule. When the rock was broken open, lots burst out, carved in oak in the characters of an ancient script. Today the place is enclosed as sacred ground, near the shrine of the boy Jupiter, who, still a nursling, sits with Juno in Fortune’s lap reaching for her breast, and is worshiped with the deepest reverence by mothers.

⁸⁶ “At the same time, they say, honey flowed from an olive tree on the site where Fortune’s temple now stands. The haruspices declared that these lots would achieve the highest renown, and on their instructions a chest was made from that olive tree. In it they stored the lots that are drawn today at Fortune’s prompting. What certainty can there be in things shuffled and drawn by a boy’s

hand at Fortune's prompting? And how were they deposited in that place? Who felled that oak, shaped it, and carved the writing? 'There is nothing,' they say, 'that a god cannot accomplish.' If only he had made the Stoics wise, so that they would not believe everything in such superstitious anxiety and misery! But ordinary life has already driven this kind of divination off the stage. The beauty and antiquity of the shrine still preserve the reputation of the Praenestine lots, and that only among the common people.

Book 2, Chapter 42

⁸⁷ "For what magistrate or man of any distinction consults lots? Elsewhere, indeed, lots have quite lost their following. Clitomachus writes that Carneades used to say he had never seen Fortune more fortunate than at Praeneste. Let us dismiss this kind of divination, then.

"Let us come to the Chaldeans' monstrous claims. Eudoxus, a pupil of Plato and, in the judgment of the most learned men, easily foremost in astronomy, held—and left his opinion in writing—that the Chaldeans deserve no belief whatever when they predict and chart a person's life from his birthday.

⁸⁸ "Panaetius, the only Stoic to reject the astrologers' predictions, also names Anchialus and Cassander, the greatest astronomers of his own time: distinguished though they were in the other branches of astronomy, they did not practice this kind of prediction. Scylax of Halicarnassus, a friend of Panaetius, eminent in astronomy and a leading statesman in his own city, rejected this entire Chaldean method of prediction.

⁸⁹ "But let us set witnesses aside and use reason. Those who defend these Chaldean predictions from birthdays argue as follows. There is, they say, a certain power in the belt of constellations called ζῳδιακός in Greek, the 'zodiac,' such that each part of this belt acts upon and changes the atmosphere in a different way, according to the stars occupying that part and the neighboring

regions at any given time. This power is variously affected by the heavenly bodies called ‘wanderers.’ When these enter the very part of the belt that was rising at someone’s birth, or a part related or in harmony with it, they speak of ‘trines’ and ‘squares.’ Since the advance and retreat of heavenly bodies bring such great revolutions and changes in the sky with the seasons of the year and their weather, and since we see what effects the sun’s power produces, they consider it not merely plausible but true that newborn children receive life and take shape according to the state of the air. From this, they say, come each person’s talents, character, mind, body, course of life, chances, and outcomes.

Book 2, Chapter 43

- 90 “What incredible delirium! Not every error deserves the name of folly. Even Diogenes the Stoic concedes something to these men: that they can predict at least what a person’s natural disposition will be and what he will be best suited to do. The rest of what they profess to know, he says, cannot possibly be known. Twins, after all, are alike in appearance, but generally unlike in life and fortune. Procles and Eurysthenes, the Spartan kings, were twin brothers.
- 91 “Yet they did not even live the same number of years: Procles’s life was a year shorter, and he far surpassed his brother in the glory of his achievements. But even what that excellent man Diogenes concedes to the Chaldeans—as though betraying his own case—I deny can be ascertained. Since, as they themselves say, the moon governs births, and the Chaldeans observe and record as birth stars whatever heavenly bodies appear in conjunction with the moon, they use the most deceptive sense of sight to judge things they ought to see by reason and the mind. Mathematical reasoning, which these people ought to have mastered, teaches how low the moon travels, almost touching the earth; how far it lies from the nearest planet, Mercury, and how much farther from Venus; then how another interval separates it from the sun, whose light is believed to illumi-

nate it. The remaining three distances are boundless and immeasurable: from the sun to Mars, from Mars to Jupiter, from Jupiter to Saturn, and beyond that to the heavens themselves, the universe's outermost and final boundary.

Book 2, Chapter 44

92 “What influence, then, could reach the moon—or rather the earth—across an almost infinite distance?

“Again, when they say, as they must, that all those born at a given moment anywhere on the inhabited earth have the same ascendant, and that the same things must happen to all who are born under the same configuration of sky and stars, do they not reveal that these interpreters of the heavens do not even understand the heavens' nature? The circles that seem to divide the sky in half and set the limits of our vision, called *ὁρίζοντες*, ‘horizons,’ by the Greeks and quite properly ‘bounding circles’ in our language, differ enormously from place to place. The stars therefore cannot rise and set at the same time for everyone.

93 “If the stars' power gives the atmosphere now one condition, now another, how can the influence on newborn children be the same when the heavens differ so greatly? Where we live, the Dog Star rises after the solstice, several days after it in fact; but among the Troglodytes, we are told, it rises before the solstice. Even if we now concede that heavenly power has some effect on creatures born on earth, they must admit that children born at the same time can have different natures because their skies differ. But that is precisely what they refuse to accept: they insist that everyone born at the same time, wherever the birth takes place, is born under the same conditions.

Book 2, Chapter 45

⁹⁴ “What madness, though, to hold that amid the greatest movements and changes in the heavens it makes no difference what wind, rain, or weather prevails in a place! Such conditions often differ so greatly in neighboring places that Tusculum has one sort of weather and Rome another. Sailors notice this especially, often feeling the greatest shifts of wind as they round a headland. When the sky is now so clear and now so stormy, is it sane to deny that this affects a child’s birth—though it certainly has no such effect—and yet to assert that births are affected by some elusive, subtle thing, wholly imperceptible and scarcely comprehensible, the atmospheric balance produced by the moon and other heavenly bodies? And is it a trifling error not to see that this entirely abolishes the power of the seed, which has the greatest force in generation and reproduction? Who fails to see that children reproduce their parents’ features, characters, and most of their postures and movements? That would not happen if these effects came not from the power and nature of the parents but from the moon’s conditioning influence and the heavens’ control.

⁹⁵ “And when people born at one and the same instant differ in nature, life, and fortune, does that not show plainly enough that the time of birth has no bearing on the conduct of life? Unless, perhaps, we suppose no one was conceived and born at precisely the same times as Africanus. Was anyone else, then, like him?

Book 2, Chapter 46

⁹⁶ “Again, is there any doubt that many people born with some unnatural deformity have been restored and set right either by nature, recovering its proper course, or by medical skill? People whose tongues were so tightly bound that

they could not speak, for instance, have had them freed by a surgeon's knife. Many have also overcome a natural defect by practice and exercise. Demetrius of Phalerum writes that Demosthenes, who could not pronounce the letter rho, practiced until he could pronounce it perfectly clearly. If these defects had been implanted and bestowed by a star, nothing could alter them. And do not different regions produce different kinds of people? It is easy enough to survey in words the differences in body and mind between Indians and Persians, Ethiopians and Syrians: their variety and unlikeness are astonishing.

Book 2, Chapter 47

97 “From this we can see that a country's position has more influence on birth than the moon's touch. As for the claim that the Babylonians spent 470,000 years observing and testing every child that was born, it is false. Had such a practice existed, it would not have been abandoned; yet we have no authority who either says it is still done or knows that it ever was. Do you see that I am not repeating Carneades's arguments, but those of Panaetius, a leader of the Stoics? I have these further questions. Were all who fell at the battle of Cannae born under one star? Their end, certainly, was one and the same. And were men of singular genius and spirit also born under one star? What moment passes without countless births? Yet surely no one resembles Homer.

98 “And if the condition of the sky and arrangement of the stars at the birth of any living creature matter, their influence must extend not only to human beings but to animals too. What could be more absurd? Indeed, our friend Lucius Tarutius of Firmum, a man exceptionally learned in Chaldean methods, even traced our city's birthday back to the festival of the Parilia at which, according to tradition, Romulus founded it. He said Rome was born with the moon in Libra, and did not hesitate to prophesy its destiny.

99 “What extraordinary power delusion has! Did even a city’s birthday fall under the influence of the stars and moon? Grant that for a child the condition of the heavens at his first breath matters: could it have any effect on the bricks or rubble from which a city is built? But why say more? Every day disproves these men. How many predictions I remember the Chaldeans making to Pompey, how many to Crassus, how many to Caesar himself: none of them would die except in old age, at home, and in glory! I find it astonishing that anyone still believes people whose predictions he sees refuted every day by facts and events.”

Book 2, Chapter 48

100 “Two kinds of divination remain,” I said, “which we are said to possess by nature, not through a learned art: inspired prophecy and dreaming. Let us discuss them, Quintus, if you agree.” “I certainly agree,” he said. “I entirely accept the arguments you have made so far. Indeed, to speak frankly, although your account has strengthened my conviction, I had already come on my own to think the Stoic view of divination excessively superstitious. I was more drawn to the Peripatetic account, both that of Dicaearchus in earlier times and that of Cratippus, who flourishes today. They hold that the human mind contains something like an oracle, from which it gains a foreknowledge of the future when the spirit moves freely and without restraint, either stirred by divine frenzy or released in sleep. I should very much like to hear what you think of these kinds, and by what arguments you undermine them.”

Book 2, Chapter 49

101 When he had said this, I began again, as though starting from a new point. “I know, Quintus,” I said, “that you have always doubted the other kinds of divination, but accepted these two, frenzy and dreams, which seem to flow from a

mind set free. I shall therefore say what I think about these two themselves, after first examining the force of the Stoics' reasoning and that of our friend Cratippus. For you said that Chrysippus, Diogenes, and Antipater reason as follows: 'If gods exist and do not reveal the future to human beings beforehand, either they do not love human beings, or they do not know what will happen, or they think it makes no difference to us to know the future, or they consider it beneath their majesty to give human beings advance signs of what is to come, or even the gods themselves cannot signify it.

- 102 "But they do not fail to love us, for they are beneficent and friendly to the human race; nor are they ignorant of what they themselves have established and ordained. Nor is knowing the future a matter of indifference to us, for knowledge will make us more careful. Nor do they consider this beneath their majesty, for nothing surpasses beneficence; nor are they unable to know the future in advance. It is therefore not the case that gods exist and yet do not signify the future to us. But gods do exist; therefore they give signs. And if they give signs of the future, they cannot fail to give us ways of understanding those signs, for otherwise their signs would be in vain. Nor, if they give us such ways, can divination fail to exist. Therefore divination exists.'

Book 2, Chapter 50

- 103 "What penetrating minds! How few words they think it takes to settle the business! They base their conclusion on assumptions not one of which is granted them. But sound reasoning reaches its disputed conclusion from things beyond dispute.

"Consider Epicurus, whom the Stoics commonly call dull and uncultivated. See how he proved that what we call the whole of reality is infinite. 'Whatever is finite,' he says, 'has a boundary.' Who would not grant that? 'Whatever has a

boundary is viewed from something else outside it.’ That too must be granted. ‘But the whole of reality is not viewed from something else outside it.’ That cannot be denied either. ‘Since, then, it has no boundary, it must be infinite.’

- 104 “Do you see how he reached a disputed point from things already granted? You dialecticians do not do that. Not only do you fail to base your conclusions on what everyone grants; you use assumptions which, even if granted, bring you no closer to proving what you want. Your first assumption is this: ‘If gods exist, they are beneficent toward human beings.’ Who will grant you that? Epicurus, who denies that the gods concern themselves at all with anyone else’s affairs or even their own? Or our own Ennius, who says, to great applause and with the people’s assent:

“‘I have always said, and always shall, that a race of gods lives in heaven;
But I believe they do not care what the human race may do.’

“He goes on to give the reason for his view; but there is no need to quote what follows. It is enough to recognize that these men take as certain what is doubtful and disputed.

Book 2, Chapter 51

- 105 “Next comes the assertion that the gods are ignorant of nothing, since they have ordained everything. Yet how fiercely the most learned men dispute this, denying that these things were ordained by the immortal gods! ‘But it is in our interest to know what will happen.’ Dicaearchus wrote a substantial book arguing that it is better not to know than to know. They deny that giving signs is beneath the gods’ majesty. No doubt it is majestic to peer into everyone’s cottage to see what would be to each person’s advantage!
- 106 “‘Nor are they unable to know the future in advance.’ Those who do not believe the future is fixed deny that they can. Do you see, then, how doubtful claims are taken as certain and conceded? Then they twist the argument into

this conclusion: 'It is therefore not the case both that gods exist and that they do not signify the future.' They think they have now proved that. Next they add, 'But gods exist'—which itself is not granted by everyone. 'Therefore they give signs.' Even that does not follow: they may give no signs and still be gods. 'Nor, if they give signs, do they fail to give some means of understanding their meaning.' But that too is possible: they might keep the knowledge themselves and not give it to human beings. Why give it to Etruscans rather than Romans? 'Nor, if they give us means, can divination be nonexistent.' Suppose the gods give them, absurd though that is: what does it matter if we cannot receive them? The final step is, 'Therefore divination exists.' Final it may be, but it is not proved: from false premises, as we have learned from these very men, truth cannot be established. So the entire argument collapses.

Book 2, Chapter 52

- ¹⁰⁷ "Let us turn now to our friend Cratippus, that excellent man. 'If,' he says, 'the office and function of eyes cannot exist without eyes, yet eyes can sometimes fail to perform their function, anyone who has even once used his eyes to perceive things truly possesses the faculty of sight that perceives things truly. Similarly, then, if the office and function of divination cannot exist without divination, but someone who possesses divination can nevertheless sometimes err and fail to perceive the truth, it is enough to establish divination that something has even once been divined in such a way that nothing in it appears to have happened by chance. There are countless cases of this kind; therefore we must admit that divination exists.' Neat and concise; but even if we generously grant the two assumptions he makes to suit himself, the further premise he adds cannot possibly be granted.

Book 2, Chapter 53

108 “If,’ he says, ‘the eyes sometimes err, they still possess the power of sight, because at other times they have seen correctly. Similarly, if someone has even once perceived something through divination, we must believe that he possesses the power of divination, even when he errs.’ Consider, my dear Cratippus, how close this likeness is: to me it seems no likeness at all. Eyes that see truly employ nature and sensation; minds that have at any time seen truly through inspired prophecy or dreams have employed fortune and chance. Unless perhaps you think those who regard dreams as dreams will grant you that, whenever a dream comes true, it has not happened by chance! But let us grant your two premises—what dialecticians call *λήμματα*, though I prefer our Latin terms. The additional premise, which they call *πρόσληψις*, will still not be granted.

109 “Cratippus adds it in this form: ‘But there are countless forebodings that are not due to chance.’ I say there is not one: see how great our disagreement is! Once that additional premise is refused, there is no conclusion. ‘But it is shameful of us not to concede something so obvious.’ What is obvious? ‘That many predictions come true,’ he says. What about the far greater number that prove false? Does not the very variation, which is characteristic of chance, teach us that chance, not nature, is the cause? Besides, Cratippus—for it is with you that I am arguing—if this argument of yours is valid, do you not see that haruspices, interpreters of lightning and portents, augurs, diviners by lots, and Chaldeans can all use it too? There is no one of these kinds in which something has not happened as predicted. So either those kinds of divination that you quite rightly reject also exist, or, if they do not, I cannot see why these two you retain should exist. The very reasoning by which you establish these can establish those you abolish.

Book 2, Chapter 54

- 110 “What authority, really, has this frenzy you call divine? Is a madman to see what a wise man cannot, and someone who has lost his human senses to have gained divine ones? We revere the Sibyl’s verses, which she is said to have poured out in a frenzy. A false rumor recently spread that their interpreter would tell the senate that the man we already had as king in fact must also be called king if we wished to survive. If that is in the books, to what man and what time does it refer? Their composer cleverly omitted all definite persons and dates, ensuring that whatever happened would look like a prediction fulfilled.
- 111 “He also took refuge in obscurity, so that the same verses could be applied to different events at different times. That this is not the song of a frenzied mind is plain from the poetry itself, which shows more art and care than inspiration and excitement, but especially from what is called an ἀκροστιχίς, an acrostic: the initial letters of successive verses are linked to spell something, as in certain verses of Ennius, ‘Quintus Ennius made this.’ That surely belongs to an attentive mind, not a frenzied one.

Book 2, Chapter 55

- 112 “In the Sibylline verses, the initial letters of each passage’s lines weave the whole opening line of that passage into the text. This is the work of a writer, not a person in a frenzy, of someone taking pains, not someone out of his mind. So let us keep the Sibyl apart and under lock and key: as our ancestors handed down, let the books not even be read without the senate’s order, and let them serve to lay religious fears to rest rather than raise them. Let us appeal to their guardians to bring anything at all out of those books rather than a king, whom neither gods nor human beings will ever again tolerate at Rome.

“But many people have often spoken true prophecies, like Cassandra:

‘And now on the great sea [...]’

“And the same woman a little later:

“‘Ah, look [...]’

113 “Must you make me believe in plays too? Let them give as much pleasure as you like; let language and thought, rhythm and song enhance them. We owe no authority or credence to inventions. In the same way, I think we should put no trust in some fellow called Publicius, in the Marcii prophets, or in Apollo’s mysteries. Some of their pronouncements are obvious fabrications, others reckless outbursts, and they have never won the approval of anyone of even ordinary sense, much less a thoughtful person.

114 “‘What?’ you will say. ‘Did not that oarsman in Coponius’s fleet predict what came to pass?’ Indeed he did—and precisely what all of us at the time feared would happen. We heard that the two camps faced each other in Thessaly. Caesar’s army seemed to us both bolder, since it had brought war upon its own country, and stronger through its long service. Not one of us was free from fear about the battle’s outcome, though, as befitted resolute men, we did not show it openly. As for that Greek, what wonder if the enormity of his fear, as so often happens, robbed him of his steadiness, his reason, his very self? In that mental upheaval he madly declared that the things he had feared while sane were going to happen. In the name of gods and human beings, which is more plausible: that a deranged oarsman could discern the immortal gods’ plans, or that one of us there at the time could—I, Cato, Varro, or Coponius himself?

Book 2, Chapter 56

115 “But now I come to you,

“‘Holy Apollo, who hold the earth’s true navel,

From which first burst the savage, monstrous voice of superstition.’

“For Chrysippus filled an entire volume with your oracles. Some, I think, are false; some came true by chance, as happens constantly in speech of every kind; some are so devious and obscure that the interpreter needs an interpreter, and the oracle itself must be referred to an oracle; some are ambiguous and need to be submitted to a dialectician. When this oracle was delivered to the wealthiest king in Asia,

“‘Croesus, crossing the Halys, will overthrow a mighty power,’

‘he thought he would overthrow his enemies’ power, but overthrew his own.

- 116 “So whichever outcome occurred, the oracle would have been true. But why believe that it was ever delivered to Croesus? Why consider Herodotus more truthful than Ennius? Could he not have invented a story about Croesus just as Ennius did about Pyrrhus? Who believes that Apollo’s oracle gave Pyrrhus this answer:

“‘I say, descendant of Aeacus: you and the Romans—one can defeat the other’?

“First, Apollo never spoke Latin. Second, the Greeks have never heard of that oracle. Besides, by Pyrrhus’s time Apollo had already stopped composing verses. Finally, although it has always been as Ennius says,

“‘The witless breed of Aeacus’s descendants—

Mighty in war rather than mighty in wisdom,’

“Pyrrhus could still have grasped the verse’s ambiguity: ‘you’ and ‘the Romans’ could make it point to his own victory no more than to a Roman one. The ambiguity that deceived Croesus could have deceived even Chrysippus; this one would not have deceived even Epicurus.

Book 2, Chapter 57

- 117 “But the main point is this: why are oracles of that kind no longer delivered at Delphi—not merely in our day, but for a long time now, until nothing could be held in greater contempt? Pressed on this point, they say that time has exhausted the power of the place from which rose that breath of earth that

stirred the Pythia's mind to deliver oracles. You would think they were talking about wine or salted fish, which lose their strength with age! We are discussing the power of a place, a power not merely natural but divine. How, then, did it fade away? 'With age,' you will say. What age can wear out divine power? And what could be more divine than an exhalation from the earth that moves the mind so as to give it foresight of things to come—not merely discerning them far in advance, but declaring them in meter and verse? When did this power fade away? Was it after people began to be less credulous?

- 118 “Demosthenes, who lived nearly three hundred years ago, was already saying then that the Pythia was φιλιππίζειν, ‘taking Philip’s side.’ His meaning was that Philip had bribed her. From that we may infer that other Delphic oracles too were less than honest. Yet somehow these superstitious, almost fanatical philosophers seem to prefer anything to being sensible. You would rather have something fade away and die out—something that, had it ever existed, would surely have been eternal—than disbelieve what ought not to be believed.

Book 2, Chapter 58

- 119 “There is a similar error about dreams. And how far back they reach to defend them! Our souls, they hold, are divine and drawn from outside us; the universe is filled with a multitude of souls in harmony with one another. Through the mind’s own divinity, then, and its connection with minds outside it, the future is perceived. Zeno, however, thinks the soul contracts, as though slipping and sinking down, and that this itself is sleep. Pythagoras and Plato, authorities of the greatest weight, bid us prepare for bed with a certain regimen and diet, so that we may see more truly in dreams. The Pythagoreans insist above all on abstaining from beans—as though that food swelled the mind rather than the belly! Somehow there is nothing so absurd that some philosopher has not said it.

120 “Do we think, then, that sleepers’ minds move of themselves in dreams, or that, as Democritus holds, they are struck by visions arriving from outside? Whichever way it happens, dreamers can see a great many false things as true. To people sailing past, things standing still appear to move; fix your gaze in a certain way and one lamp flame looks like two. Need I mention how many false things the mad and the drunken see? If we must not trust visions of that sort, I do not know why we should trust dreams. If you like, you may argue about these delusions just as well as about dreams: you may say that stationary things appearing to move signify an earthquake or some sudden flight, while a doubled lamp flame foretells dissension and sedition breaking out.

Book 2, Chapter 59

121 “From the visions of madmen or drunkards, too, countless conjectures can be drawn about apparent future events [...] For who can throw a javelin all day without sometimes hitting the mark? We dream all night, and scarcely a night passes without our sleeping; yet we wonder that something we dreamed should sometimes come to pass! What is more uncertain than a throw of knucklebones? Still, no one throws them repeatedly without at some point making the Venus throw, sometimes even a second and third time. Are we so foolish that we would rather say Venus prompted it than that chance produced it? If false visions are not to be trusted at other times, I cannot see what special privilege sleep possesses, that in it falsehood should have the force of truth.

122 “If nature had arranged for sleepers to act out their dreams, everyone going to bed would have to be tied down: dreamers would cause greater disturbances than any madmen. If we must put no faith in madmen’s visions because they are false, I cannot see why we should believe dreamers’ visions, which are even more disordered. Is it because madmen do not recount their visions to an interpreter, while people who have dreamed do? I ask this too: if I want to write or read something, sing or play the lyre, or explain a point of geometry, physics, or

dialectic, should I wait for a dream or employ an art? Without such an art, none of these things can be done or worked out. Indeed, if I wanted to sail, I would not steer as I had dreamed: the penalty would be immediate.

- 123 “How can it make sense, then, for the sick to seek treatment from an interpreter of dreams rather than a doctor? Can Aesculapius or Serapis prescribe us a cure in sleep, while Neptune cannot give helmsmen instructions for their craft? And if Minerva gives medical treatment without a doctor, will the Muses not give dreamers knowledge of writing, reading, and the other arts? If a cure for illness were given in dreams, these other gifts I have mentioned would be given too. Since they are not given, neither is medical treatment. Remove that, and all the authority of dreams is gone.

Book 2, Chapter 60

- 124 “But grant that these points, too, are obvious; let us now look deeper. Either some divine power, concerned for our welfare, makes dreams convey signs; or interpreters understand from a certain harmony and interconnection in nature, which they call *συμπάθεια*, ‘sympathy,’ what corresponds to each thing in dreams and what follows from it; or neither is true, but there is a body of steady, long-continued observation of what generally happens and follows after a particular vision in sleep. First, then, we must understand that no divine power produces dreams. Indeed, it is plain that no dream visions proceed from the gods’ will: the gods would send them for our sake, so that we could foresee the future.
- 125 “How few people, then, obey dreams, understand them, or remember them! How many despise them, thinking such superstition a sign of a feeble, old woman’s mind! Why, then, would a god, concerned for these people, warn them in dreams they regard as unworthy not merely of attention but even of remembrance? A god cannot be ignorant of anyone’s state of mind, nor is it

worthy of a god to do anything vainly and without purpose—something inconsistent even with human steadfastness. So if most dreams go unnoticed or unheeded, either the god does not know it, or he uses dream signs in vain. Neither possibility is compatible with divinity. We must therefore admit that a god signifies nothing through dreams.

Book 2, Chapter 61

- 126 “I ask this as well: if a god gives us these visions to enable foresight, why does he not give them to us awake rather than asleep? Whether an impulse arriving from outside stirs sleepers’ minds, or the minds move of themselves, or some other cause makes us seem to see, hear, and act during sleep, the same cause could operate while we are awake. If the gods did this in sleep for our sake, they would do the same while we are awake—especially since Chrysippus, arguing against the Academics, says that waking impressions are far clearer and more certain than those of dreamers. It would therefore have been more worthy of divine beneficence, in caring for us, to give us clearer visions awake rather than more obscure ones in sleep. Since this does not happen, dreams should not be considered divine.

Book 2, Chapter 62

- 127 “Again, what need is there of circuitous paths and twists, forcing us to employ interpreters of dreams? If the god was concerned for us, why not say directly, ‘Do this; do not do that,’ and give the vision to someone awake rather than asleep?
“And who would dare say that all dreams are true? ‘Some dreams are true,’ says Ennius, ‘but not all need be.’ What, then, is the distinction? Which does he regard as true, which as false? If the true ones are sent by a god, where do the

false ones come from? If those too are divine, what could be more inconsistent than a god? And what could be more foolish than to agitate mortal minds with false, lying visions? But if true visions are divine while false and empty ones are human, what license is this to declare that the god produced one and nature the other, rather than that the god produced them all—which you deny—or nature produced them all? Since you deny the former, you must admit the latter.

- 128 “By nature I mean that condition in which the mind never stands still and can never be free of activity and movement. When the body’s weariness prevents it from using the limbs or senses, it falls into varied, uncertain visions, arising, as Aristotle says, from lingering traces of things it did or thought about while awake. Their confusion sometimes produces marvelous dream images. If some of these are false and others true, I should very much like to know by what mark they can be distinguished. If there is none, why should we listen to these interpreters? If there is one, I am eager to hear what it is; but they will be at a loss.

Book 2, Chapter 63

- 129 “For the question now is which is more plausible: that the immortal gods, surpassing all things in excellence, run about the beds—and even the meanest pallets—of every mortal everywhere, and, when they see someone snoring, put before him twisted, obscure visions that frighten him out of sleep and send him to an interpreter in the morning; or that nature makes the restlessly active mind seem to see in sleep what it saw awake. Which is worthier of philosophy: explaining these things through the superstition of witches, or through an account of nature? Even if true interpretation of dreams were possible, those who profess it would still be incapable of it: they belong to the most frivolous and ignorant class. Yet your Stoics deny that anyone but a wise man can be a diviner.

- 130 “Chrysippus, indeed, defines divination in these words: ‘The faculty of recognizing, seeing, and explaining signs sent by the gods to human beings.’ Its office, he says, is to know beforehand the gods’ disposition toward us, what they signify, and how those signs should be dealt with and expiated. He likewise defines the interpretation of dreams as ‘the faculty of discerning and explaining what the gods signify to human beings in dreams.’ Well, then, does this require ordinary understanding, or exceptional talent and complete learning? Yet we have known no one of that kind.

Book 2, Chapter 64

- 131 “Consider, then, whether, even if I granted you that divination exists—which I never shall—we might still be unable to find a single diviner. And what sort of intention do the gods have if in dreams they give us neither signs we can understand for ourselves nor signs for which we can find interpreters? If the gods confront us with things for which we have neither knowledge nor an expounder, they are like Carthaginians or Spaniards speaking in our senate without an interpreter.
- 132 “And what purpose do the obscurities and riddles of dreams serve? The gods ought to want us to understand the warnings they send for our sake. ‘What? Is no poet obscure, no natural philosopher?’ Certainly: Euphorion is even excessively obscure;
- 133 “but Homer is not. Which, then, is the better poet? Heraclitus is very obscure, Democritus not at all. Are the two even comparable? You warn me for my own sake about something I cannot understand? Why warn me at all, then? It is as though a doctor told a patient to take
“‘An earthborn, grass-crawling, house-carrying, bloodless creature,’
“instead of saying ‘a snail’ like a human being. In Pacuvius, Amphion says, rather obscurely,

“A slow-footed four-legged creature, wild, low to the ground, rough,
With a short head, a snaking neck, a fearsome look,
Gutted, lifeless, yet with a living creature’s voice.’

“Then the Athenians reply:

“‘We do not understand, unless you tell us plainly.’

“And he answers in one word: ‘Tortoise.’ Could you not have said that at the beginning, you lyre-player?

Book 2, Chapter 65

- 134 “A man reports to an interpreter that he dreamed of an egg hanging from a strap on his bedroom couch—this dream is in Chrysippus’s book. The interpreter replies that a treasure is buried beneath the couch. The man digs and finds some gold surrounded by silver. He sends the interpreter a little of the silver, as much as he thinks fit. ‘Nothing from the yolk?’ the interpreter asks. He thought the egg had indicated gold by its yolk and silver by the rest. Has no one else ever dreamed of an egg, then? Why did this obscure fellow alone find treasure? How many poor people deserving the gods’ protection receive no dream to guide them to a treasure! And why was his warning so obscure, with an egg made into an image of treasure, instead of an open command to look for treasure, just as Simonides was openly forbidden to sail?

Book 2, Chapter 66

- 135 “Obscure dreams, then, are wholly incompatible with the gods’ majesty.
“Let us turn to plain, clear dreams: the one about the man murdered by the innkeeper at Megara; the one about Simonides, who was forbidden to sail by the man he had buried; and the one about Alexander, which I am surprised you passed over, Quintus. When his friend Ptolemy was struck in battle by a poi-

soned missile and lay dying in great agony from the wound, Alexander sat beside him and fell asleep. In his sleep, they say, he saw the serpent his mother Olympias kept, carrying a little root in its mouth and telling him where it grew—not far from where they were. Its power, the serpent said, was such that it would readily cure Ptolemy. Alexander woke and told his friends the dream. Men were sent to seek the little root; when it was found, Ptolemy is said to have been cured, along with many soldiers wounded by the same kind of missile.

Book 2, Chapter 67

¹³⁶ “You also produced many dreams from historical accounts: those of Phalaris’s mother, Cyrus the Elder, Dionysius’s mother, Hamilcar the Carthaginian, Hannibal, and Publius Decius; then the now familiar dream about the leader of the dance, Gaius Gracchus’s dream, and the recent one of Caecilia, daughter of Balearicus. But these are other people’s experiences and therefore unknown to us; some may even be inventions. Who vouches for them? What have we to say about our own dreams? Yours concerned my emerging from the river and reaching the bank on horseback; mine concerned Marius with his laurel-wreathed fasces, ordering that I be taken to his monument. There is one explanation for all dreams, Quintus. By the immortal gods, let us take care that superstition and distorted thinking do not overwhelm it!

¹³⁷ “What Marius do you think I saw? His likeness and image, I suppose, as Democritus holds. Where did that image come from? He maintains that images stream from solid bodies and definite shapes. What body of Marius was there, then? ‘The body that once existed,’ he says. So this image of Marius was pursuing me onto the plain of Atina? ‘Everything is full of images: no form can be conceived except through an impact of images.’

- 138 “Well, then, are these images so obedient to us that the moment we wish it they come running—even images of things that do not exist? What shape is so unheard-of, so nonexistent, that the mind cannot fashion it for itself? Thus we have mental pictures even of things we have never seen: the layouts of towns, human forms.
- 139 “When I think of the walls of Babylon or Homer’s face, does some image of them strike me? In that case we could know anything we pleased, for there is nothing we cannot think about. No images, then, steal into sleepers’ minds from outside; none stream off at all. Nor have I known anyone who said nothing with greater authority. The mind’s power and nature are such that in waking life it is active, not through any impulse from outside, but by its own movement, with an astonishing swiftness. Supported by limbs, body, and senses, it perceives, thinks, and feels everything more surely. But when these supports are withdrawn and the body’s weariness leaves the mind on its own, it moves by itself. Shapes and actions pass through it, and many things seem to be heard and spoken.

Book 2, Chapter 68

- 140 “In a weakened, relaxed mind these many things naturally appear confused and varied in every way. Above all, the traces of things we thought about or did while awake stir and move within us. At that time Marius was much in my thoughts, as I recalled the courage and constancy with which he had borne his own grave misfortune. That, I believe, was why I dreamed of him. You, thinking anxiously about me, suddenly saw me in a dream emerging from a river. In each of our minds there remained traces of our waking thoughts. But some details were added: in my case, Marius’s monument; in yours, the horse I was riding, which sank with me and reappeared.

¹⁴¹ “Do you think any old woman would have been so delirious as to believe in dreams if such things did not sometimes coincide by sheer random chance? Alexander seemed to hear a serpent speak. The story may be false or it may be true; either way, there is nothing remarkable about it. He did not hear a serpent speaking; he seemed to hear it—and, to make it more impressive, it spoke while holding a root in its mouth. But nothing is too extraordinary for a dreamer. I ask, though, why Alexander had so vivid and definite a dream, yet did not have others at other times, and why other people do not have many. Apart from this dream of Marius, I myself have had none worth mentioning that I remember. All those nights in so long a life have been wasted, then!

Book 2, Chapter 69

¹⁴² “Now, indeed, with my work in the courts interrupted, I have curtailed my late-night studies and added midday naps, which I did not formerly take. Yet with all this sleep I have received no warning in a dream, especially about matters of such consequence. Nor do I ever feel more as though I am dreaming than when I see the magistrates in the Forum or the senate in its chamber.

“For—and this is the second branch of our division—what continuity and interconnection in nature, which, as I said, they call *συμπάθεια*, ‘sympathy,’ could require us to infer treasure from an egg? Doctors do recognize approaching or developing illnesses from certain symptoms. They also say that some signs of health, such as whether we are overfull or famished, can be understood from certain kinds of dreams. But what natural affinity links dreams to treasure, an inheritance, public office, victory, and many other things of that kind?

¹⁴³ “A man is said to have passed stones while dreaming of sexual intercourse. I see the sympathetic connection: a vision was presented to the sleeper such that natural force, not a deluded belief, produced what happened. But what natural force presented Simonides with the apparition that forbade him to sail? And what connection with nature had that recorded dream of Alcibiades? Shortly

before his death, he dreamed that he was wrapped in his mistress's little cloak. When he lay cast out, unburied and abandoned by everyone, his mistress covered his body with her mantle. Was this, then, inherent in future events, with natural causes? Or did chance bring about both the vision and its fulfillment?

Book 2, Chapter 70

¹⁴⁴ “And do not the interpreters’ own conjectures reveal their ingenuity rather than nature’s power and harmony? A runner planning to go to Olympia dreamed he was riding in a four-horse chariot. In the morning, off he went to an interpreter. ‘You will win,’ the man said: ‘that is what the horses’ speed and strength signify.’ Afterward he went to Antiphon. ‘You must lose,’ Antiphon said. ‘Do you not see that four ran ahead of you?’ Here is another runner—and Chrysippus’s book is full of dreams of this sort, as is Antipater’s—but to return to the runner: he reported to an interpreter that he had dreamed of becoming an eagle. ‘Victory is yours,’ the interpreter said. ‘No bird flies with greater force.’ To the same man Antiphon said, ‘You fool, do you not see that you have lost? That bird is always last itself as it pursues and chases other birds.’

¹⁴⁵ “A married woman who longed to give birth but was unsure whether she was pregnant dreamed that her genitals were sealed shut. She reported it. The interpreter said she could not have conceived, since she had been sealed. Another, however, said she was pregnant, since people do not generally put a seal on anything empty. What art is there in an interpreter’s clever trickery? Do the examples I have given, and the countless others the Stoics have collected, signify anything beyond the ingenuity of men who take some resemblance and turn their conjecture now this way, now that? Doctors have certain signs in a patient’s pulse and breathing, and from many other things they foresee what is to come. Helmsmen, seeing squid leap or dolphins dart into harbor, think a storm is foretold. These signs can readily be explained by reason and traced to nature; the things I mentioned a moment ago cannot possibly be.

Book 2, Chapter 71

¹⁴⁶ “‘But long observation’—this is the one branch still left—‘has created an art by recording events.’ Really? Can dreams be observed? How? Their variations are countless. Nothing can be imagined so topsy-turvy, so incoherent, so monstrous, that we cannot dream it. How, then, can we embrace in memory or record through observation these endless, ever-new visions? Astronomers have recorded the movements of the wandering stars: an order was discovered in those bodies where none had been suspected. Show me, then, what order dreams have, what pattern of recurrence. And how can true dreams be distinguished from false ones, when the same dreams have different outcomes for different people, and not always the same outcome even for the same person? We do not generally believe a liar even when he tells the truth. I therefore find it astonishing that, when some dream comes true, these men do not let the many discredit the one, but let the one confirm countless others.

¹⁴⁷ “If, then, a god does not produce dreams, if nature has no such connection with them, and if observation has been unable to establish knowledge of them, it follows that we should assign dreams no authority whatever. Especially so, since those who see them do not themselves divine anything, while their interpreters employ conjecture, not nature; since chance, over almost countless ages, has produced more wonders in every sphere than in dream visions; and since nothing is more uncertain than a conjecture that can be turned in different, sometimes even opposite, directions.

Book 2, Chapter 72

148 “Let this divination through dreams, then, be driven off the stage along with the rest. To speak the truth, superstition has spread among the nations, crushing almost every mind and taking possession of human weakness. This has been said in the books on the nature of the gods, and making this clear has been our chief purpose in the present discussion. We thought we would greatly benefit both ourselves and our countrymen if we could uproot it altogether. Yet—and I want this clearly understood—abolishing superstition does not abolish religion. It is wise to uphold our ancestors’ institutions by preserving their rites and ceremonies; and the beauty of the universe and the order of the heavenly bodies compel us to acknowledge some surpassing, eternal being that the human race should look up to and admire.

149 “So, just as religion joined with knowledge of nature should even be extended, every root of superstition must be plucked out. It presses upon you, bears down on you, pursues you wherever you turn: if you hear a prophet or an ominous word, offer a sacrifice or catch sight of a bird, see a Chaldean or a haruspex; if lightning flashes, thunder sounds, something is struck from heaven, or anything resembling a portent is born or comes to pass. Some such thing is bound to happen much of the time, so that the mind is never allowed to rest in peace.

150 “Sleep seems a refuge from every hardship and anxiety. Yet from sleep itself arise a host of cares and fears. These would have less force in themselves, and would be more readily dismissed, had philosophers not taken up the defense of dreams—not the most contemptible philosophers, either, but men exceptionally acute, able to perceive what follows and what conflicts, already thought almost complete and perfect in wisdom. Had Carneades not opposed their license, I suspect they would by now be considered the only philosophers. Nearly all our argument and contention is with them, not because we hold

them in the greatest contempt, but because they seem to defend their views with the greatest subtlety and judgment. Since it is the Academy's distinctive practice to impose no judgment of its own, to approve what seems most like the truth, to compare arguments and bring out what can be said for each position, and, without lending its own authority, to leave the hearer's judgment independent and free, we shall hold to this practice handed down from Socrates. If you agree, my brother Quintus, we shall employ it between ourselves as often as possible." "Nothing," he said, "could give me greater pleasure." With these words, we rose.