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CICERO'S ACCURACY CONCERNING EPICUREAN PHYSICS, METAPHYSICS,
AND ETHICS

NATHAN ADAM WEINER
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Paul B. Harvey, Jr.
Head, Department of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies
Thesis Supervisor

Mary Lou Zimmerman Munn
Senior Lecturer in Classics
Honors Adviser

*Signatures on file in the Schreyer Honors College

ABSTRACT

The Epicurean doctrines are a unique set of ancient philosophical ideas that received much criticism during its prevalence. Remains of ‘The Garden’ where supporters and ‘students’ of the Epicurean school met do not exist and the original scriptures of Epicurus are so scarce scholars rely on third parties for evidence of these doctrines. Among these are Lucretius, a follower of Epicureanism, who expanded on and clarified Epicurus’ doctrines in his *On the Nature of Things* (formally titled *De Natura Rerum*) and Cicero, an academic and critic against the physical, metaphysical, and ethical teachings of Epicurus. As a member of the Academic school of philosophy, Cicero took a dialogic approach to philosophy, hearing both sides of the argument. Cicero wrote about Epicureanism, as told by Gaius Velleius in the first installment of *On the Nature of the Gods* (formally titled *De Natura Deorum*). He wrote a book of similar style, *On the Ends of Good and Bad* (formally titled *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*) which criticized heavily Epicurean ethics. In my thesis, I examine the main features of Epicurean philosophy and the strength of Cicero’s understanding of this philosophy in order to determine the accuracy of his arguments. This thesis allows an Epicurean rebuttal to Cicero’s argument and determines whether the Roman Republic received an accurate portrayal of Epicureanism from the popular politician.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Epicurean Philosophy and Doctrines

Introduction

'Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for.' -Epicurus

The ultimate goal of Epicureanism is to live a life of happiness, free from pain and free from fear. To do this, Epicurus seeks to determine and to dispel any sources of unhappiness. Misconceptions about the gods, society, the soul, and what is truly valuable in life are all things that Epicurus hopes he can set straight and thus use to expel human anxiety (Long 14). Although his ideologies involve his beliefs about the gods – and they are important to him – his philosophy is more an ethical guide rather than a religious doctrine. Unfortunately for the sanctity of this philosophy, Cicero treats it largely as a teaching on physics and metaphysics rather than the moral compass that it is. This would not be an issue to the philosophy except for two substantial reasons: 1. Cicero writes his criticism on Epicureanism over two centuries after it is established, giving him the last word; 2. the whole purpose for Cicero's criticism on the philosophy is to create a Roman understanding of Greek philosophy (Cic. *Fin.* i 1-6). This means that the Romans have to trust Cicero's understanding of the philosophy. This trust is not undeserved as Cicero served a successful career as an orator, lawyer, and consul for the Roman Republic and proponents of the theory are less known and respected. Thankfully, the Roman poet Lucretius, whose only life accomplishment is undertaking the task of translating Epicurean doctrines and refining their meanings, lays out the most acceptable interpretation of Epicurus' philosophy. This also happens to be one of the only complete sources of Epicureanism, as much of Epicurus' work do not survive him.

It is important to analyze this philosophy and its criticisms absent of the knowledge of modern science and to be mindful of the circumstances of their respective eras.

Lucretius and Cicero write *De Natura Rerum* and *De Natura Deorum* in the last century B.C. (Bailey 6; Rackham *Fin.* xi). This is a period of political turmoil and unrest and nearing the end of the Roman Republic. ‘The Republican regime was breaking down, and with it the system of morals and beliefs on which it rested’ (Bailey 6). Cicero, as a follower of Plato and Aristotle’s philosophy, favor a nation focused on the ‘conception of the State’ and being an upright fellow citizen (Bailey 7), while Epicurus’ philosophy is essentially anti-social and encourages little or no involvement with the State or fellow countrymen (Smethurst 113). Regardless, the Romans are infected with Greek skepticism ushered in by Julius Caesar and without philosophy this is not enough to satiate their need to have answers. Philosophy claims to offer them a guide to ethical conduct, something that religion at the time does not consider (Bailey 7). Therefore, without philosophy, the citizens of the republic might begin to act lawlessly and without morals. Cicero might attempt to take advantage of his public standing when describing the Epicurean doctrines. This thesis offers an alternative motive to Cicero writing *De Natura Deorum* and analyzes the accuracy of his understanding of Epicurean philosophy.

Main Epicurean Facets

It seems to be an inevitable anxiety of the human race to lust at life's unanswerable questions. How was the Earth and life created? What happens to us after we die? Is there a higher power governing the human race? Like most philosophies of its time, Epicureanism seeks to answer these questions. Even more important for the Epicureans is to be rid of the anxiety that these questions and even sometimes their answers cause. Two subjects hold particular importance to Epicurus in regards to having proper beliefs – theology and psychology (Long 41). Epicurus takes a logical, step-by-step approach to dispelling anxiety, so it is appropriate to first describe his answers to the previous questions and end with his doctrines on ethics, which are reaffirmed by his theories.

Knowledge

Epicurus begins his philosophy by defining where knowledge comes from. To this he first assigns sensations. He believes that color, sound, and smell are emanating from actual objects that hold these characteristics and that these properties of objects are entering the 'sense organs' in the form of atom clusters. *En route* to the sensory organ, these atoms can either enter undisturbed, and thus imprint an accurate idea of the object emitting the atoms, or they can become altered and deliver an image which corresponds to the atoms' modified structure. Epicurus is not blind to the fact that sensations can be clear or blurred and that the closer one is to an object the less likely that an altered sensation will occur; therefore, he concludes that accurate images of objects can only be created by distinct sensations. Unclear sensations 'await confirmation' from these distinct sensations (Long 21-23).

The second step after clear sensations to attaining knowledge is what Epicurus calls *prolepsis*, or preconceptions. These are collections of clear sensations bucketed into memories of similar sensations. Long after a sensation of an object ends, the preconceptions remain imprinted on the mind as a record of ‘remembered experience of [that] particular’ object (Long 23). When a similar sensation is once again felt, the mind can call upon the *prolepsis* of that sense and determine the object. From this, Epicurus claims that judgments and language are born stating, ‘We should not have named anything unless we had previously learnt its form by a preconception’ (Long 23).

Epicurus believes that other ‘images’ can enter the mind directly and ignore the sensory process. Also comprised of atoms, their density is much lesser and supposedly accounts for ‘dream-images, phantoms, visions of the dead, and... effluences from the gods’ (Long 24-25). Atomic density is discussed later on pages 7 and 8. The repeated imprints of these on the mind create preconceptions, which ultimately can be built upon one another to form new, non-empirical concepts (Long 56).

Knowledge’s next step involves the acceptance of Epicurus’ maxims: ‘sensations which are “clear” provide accurate information about the external appearance and properties of objects’; weak judgments can be confirmed by a ‘lack of contrary evidence’ and clear sensations can act as confirmation for judgments about non-evident objects if they are consistent with the clear sensations. The latter has obvious flaws especially when applied to astronomy as he seems to ignore that even in his era there are astronomers beginning to prove non-evident theories with ‘systematic records and mathematical calculations (Long 26). His maxim regarding contrary evidence is a style of induction that he employs to knowledge. An example of induction that an Epicurean

might support would be the following statement: ‘All polar bears that any man has observed are white. Therefore, all polar bears are white.’ They did not believe that this supposes that all polar bears are white, rather that evidence ‘justifies the general inference’ that all polar bears are white. Epicurus also thinks it to be fair to make inferences based on analogy from the evident to the non-evident. This seems somewhat silly but follows his maxims – evidence supports the analogy for evident concepts and there is no contradictory evidence disproving it for the non-evident concepts, therefore it can apply to non-evident concepts.

Epicurus believes that this is the process by which knowledge is created – a step-by-step sentient cognition leading ultimately to apparent truths: sensations and experience lead to preconceptions and judgments; these judgments and sensations can then be combined to form general inferences regarding anything which only contradictory sensations and evidence can disprove. Despite its blatant holes and exceptions, this system seems a valid methodology for learning.

Atoms and Void

The second component of Epicurus’ philosophy involves the structure of the physical world. Although claiming to be self-taught, his theory at the very least is an expansion of the Pre-Socratic atomic theory of Leucippus and later Democritus, who stated, ‘What really exists is ultimately reducible to... the full (indivisible bodies) and the empty (space)’ (Long 30-31). Epicurus believes that the physical world is comprised of an infinite amount of atoms moving through infinite void or empty space. He uses the following principles as proof for this theory:

1. 'Nothing is able to come from nothing
2. Nothing is able to be reduced to nothing
3. The universe never was nor will be in a condition which differs from its present one' (Long 31)

From these, he drew the following conclusions:

1. Because there is evidence that bodies exist, it must also hold that empty space exist in order for the bodies to move through
2. If 'nothing is able to be reduced to nothing', ultimately bodies reach a point of being indivisible
3. Nothing is an independent entity except atoms and void, therefore, all things can be reduced to atoms and void

His main point is that, although we are not able to observe atoms in their indivisible form, we observe 'birth and death, [and] growth and decay' and they 'require the existence of bodies which are themselves changeless and wholly impenetrable' (Long 32).

The scale of this theory expands when Epicurus argues for the infiniteness of the universe, stating that both the atoms and void contained in it are also limitless. 'If the universe were limited it would have extremities' (*Ep. Hdt.* 41-2). To put this into perspective, for something to have extremities, it requires that something exist outside of it in order to contain it, and no other entity is known that contains the universe. Further atoms and void are limitless because unlimited atoms can not be supported by limited space and unlimited space would not yield the 'plurality' of objects that are evident (atoms would be too scattered) (*Ep. Hdt.* 41-2).

Finally, though atoms are indivisible, Epicurus believes that they contain parts, which he calls *minima*. These *minima* cannot be separated from each other on a single atom and they themselves are also indivisible providing explanation why atoms can have different shapes. Lucretius supports this, attributing this property of atoms to the creation of unique matter. Epicurus is often said to have done nothing to originate atomic theory, but he is certainly alone in maintaining these *minima* and thus dispelling a fundamental flaw that Aristotle, an avid analyst of atomism himself, points out (Long 35).

Motion of Atoms and its Effect on the Creation of Bodies

Epicurus agrees with his atomist predecessors on one point about the motion of atoms – they are always moving; however, he believes their motion is due to the fact that all atoms had weight (Long 35-36). Aristotle gives Epicurus the inspiration for connecting weight with movement and Epicurus reaches the conclusion that inside the universe, things can move up or down in regards to a fixed point. Because atoms have weight, their natural motion is downward. Any other movement requires something other than weight (Long 36).

There exists a major flaw, however, in a theory that states all atoms are falling downward at the same constant speed and direction – they never collide and thus nothing is created in the universe. Although no evidence of this original addendum survives Epicurus, Lucretius tells of the Epicurean idea of atomic swerving, stating that at any undetermined time and place, a single atom might change course and be able to collide with other atoms (Long 37). The resulting collision causes the atoms to either ‘rebound’ at the same speed at which atoms normally travel or form a temporary, stable

‘compound’. Lucretius states:

et quae cumque magis condense conciliatu
 exiguis intervallis convecta resultant,
 indupedita suis perplexis ipsa figuris,
 haec validas saxi radices et fera ferri
 corpora constituunt et cetera de genere horum.
 pauca quae porro magnum per inane vagantur,
 cetera dissiliunt longe longeque recursant
 in magnis intervallis; haec aera rarum
 sufficiunt nobis et splendida lumina solis.

(And all those which are driven together in more close-packed union and leap back but a little space apart, entangled by their own close-locking shapes, these make the strong roots of rock and the brute bulk of iron and all other things of their kind. Of the rest which wander through the great void, a few leap far apart, and recoil afar with great spaces between; these supply for us thin air and the bright light of the sun, Lucret ii 100-108).

Epicurean doctrine states that the varying densities of objects are relative to the consistency of atoms and void in their compounds. These compounds ultimately make up what Epicurus considers ‘seeds’. These ‘seeds’ or molecules make up the objects that we perceive, such as rocks. A rock described by Lucretius is made up of rock ‘seeds’ or rock molecules and breaking them down results in just atoms and void, not of the four elements that most other Greek philosophies believe (Long 39).

The final chapter of Epicurean atomic theory ends with the constant leaving and replenishment of atoms. As stated earlier, sensations are a result of atoms leaving an object and imprinting a sense in our mind through sensory organs. These atoms leave the surface of an object and are replenished by other atoms colliding with the object – this provides explanation why objects don’t lose their apparent mass (Long 39). Using all these properties of atoms and void, Epicurus eliminates the need for supernatural beings in the creation of the universe. Assuming atoms and void exist in exactly the way

Epicurus describes them, all the objects of the universe would have been created and continue to be created by the collision of atoms and their relative compositions with void.

The Epicurean gods

Epicurus' idea of the gods differs greatly from popular Greek opinion. While he is confident that they exist, he does not give credit for phenomena, movement of celestial bodies, and natural disasters to them like Plato did. Plato also believes that the celestial bodies are intelligent, supernatural beings watching over and governing humans. Subsequent to his theorizing this, it becomes common belief. Epicurus pins this as the 'primary source of human anxiety' (Long 43). This section will discuss the nature of the gods rather than a response to the removal of human anxiety as it is more a matter of ethics.

Epicurus makes three assumptions about the gods: 1. They exist; 2. They are happy and immortal; and 3. Their happiness exists in 'uninterrupted tranquility' (Long 44). One may wonder: if Epicurus does not think that the gods have any interaction with mankind, why does he believe that they exist? Epicurus believes that because mankind universally believes that the gods exist, it must be true, a clear example of the Aristotelian premise: 'That about which all agree must be true' (Long 45). Lucretius also wrote of this universal belief:

quippe etenim iam tum divom mortalia saecula
 egregias animo facies vigilante videbant
 et magis in somnis mirando corporis auctu...
 ...aeternamque dabant vitam, quia semper eorum
 subpeditabatur facies et forma manebat,
 et tamen omnino quod tantis viribus auctos
 non temere ulla vi convinci posse putabant.
 fortunisque ideo longe praestare putabant

quod mortis timor haut quemquam vexaret eorum,
 et simul in somnis quia multa et mira videbant
 efficere et nullum capere ipsos inde laborem.

(For indeed already the races of mortals used to perceive the glorious shapes of the gods with waking mind, and all the more in sleep with wondrous bulk of body... ..And they gave them everlasting life because their images came in constant stream and the form remained unchanged, and indeed above all because they thought that those endowed with such strength could not readily be vanquished by any force. They thought that they far excelled in happiness, because the fear of death never harassed any of them, and at the same time because in sleep they saw them accomplish many marvels, yet themselves not undergo any toil, Lucret v 1168-1170, 1175-1182).

Thus, for the same reason as assumption 1 about the gods, assumption 2 – gods are happy and immortal – is true: every man had the same preconceptions. Further, the gods cannot have created the universe because of the apparent imperfections in it. Instead, the gods exist in a state of perfect and eternal tranquility, like a true Epicurean (Long 45).

The gods' existence is rooted in images that individuals receive from their form, similar, but not exactly like those received by physical objects (explained on page 4). There is a problem with this, as by natural law, compounds made of atoms and void cannot resist destruction eternally. How can gods, then, be immortal? Epicurus believed that they do not possess 'solidity' and are formed by 'images' comprised of fine atoms flowing endlessly towards the gods, replenishing their supply of atoms (Long 46-47).

What the gods engage in is ultimately Epicurus' model for life. They 'have no occupations, they can be affected by no pain, they are liable to no change, they dwell in no world but in the spaces which separate one world from another' (Long 48). Epicurus' logic follows: the 'absence of pain is the highest pleasure, and pleasure is the essence of happiness, the gods are perfectly happy' (Long 48). This should be used as a model for the ideal Epicurean life, to the extent that any human can achieve it. For this reason,

while the gods have no concern for human affairs, humans might have concerns with the gods' affairs, as they should strive for the same happiness as the gods.

The Anxieties of Death

Death is one of the biggest anxieties of humans. This anxiety becomes two-part when a belief in a relationship between gods and men exist. God-fearing men are troubled with the potential rewards and punishments of their actions through the judgments of the gods. For the Epicureans, both these fears are expelled by their belief that a man's life has two limits – birth and death. Lucretius stated in Book iii of *De Natura Rerum* that no man is disturbed by anything that occurs before his life, and by 'parity of reason' nothing that occurs after his life would be a disturbance once consciousness is gone (Long 50). Epicurus states that he had no life before his current one and that he is not liable to a life after it. He also acknowledges the existence of the human soul, but he believes that it is born and dies with the body (Long 50). The soul is a recipe of special atomic compounds (breath, air, fire, and an unnamed element) that are inseparable from one another, and hold immeasurable capacities. This unnamed element is what made this body of atomic compounds more complex than a specific mixture of randomly colliding elements (Long 51-52).

Epicurus vaguely deals with the purpose of the soul, but it seems very similar to what modern science purports the nervous system is for. Epicureans believe that when the mind receives a sensation, it triggers the sense organ to recognize that sensation after the atoms of the soul tell it to so. If someone wishes to walk, the mind uses the preconception of walking to first stir the soul atoms to move and those subsequently

cause the body to walk. Sensation does not exist beyond consciousness; therefore, again, the soul does not remain after the body dies (Long 53-55).

Free-Will

Not much is written in Epicurean literature regarding ‘free-will’ but it seems to be an important facet of the philosophy. Lucretius is the only Epicurean who writes anything resembling free will:

nec similest ut cum impulsus procedimus ictu
 viribus alterius magnis magnoque coactu;
 nam tum materiem totius corporis omnem
 perspicuumst nobis invitis ire rapique,
 donec eam refrenavit per membra voluntas.
 iamne vides igitur, quamquam vis exera multos
 pellat et invitos cogat procedere saepe
 praecipitesque rapi, tamen esse in pectore nostro
 quiddam quod contra pugnare obstareque possit?
 cuius ad arbitrium quoque copia materiai
 cogitur inter dum flecti per membra per artus
 et proiecta refrenatur retroque residit.
 quare in seminibus quoque idem fateare necessest,
 esse aliam praeter plagas et pondera causam
 motibus, unde haec est nobis innata potestas,
 de nihilo quoniam fieri nihil posse videmus.
 pondus enim prohibet ne plagis omnia fiant
 externa quasi vi; sed ne res ipsa necessum
 intestinum habeat cunctis in rebus agendis
 et devicta quasi cogatur ferre patique,
 id facit exiguum clinamen principiorum
 nec regione loci certa nec tempore certo.

(Nor is it the same as when we move forward impelled by a blow from the strong might and strong constraint of another [man]. For then it is clear to see that all the matter of the body moves and is hurried on against our will, until the will has reined it back throughout the limbs. Do you not then now see that, albeit a force outside pushes many men and constrains them often to go forward against their will and to be hurried away headlong, yet there is something in our breast, which can fight against it and withstand it? And at its bidding too the store of matter is constrained now and then to turn throughout the limbs and members, and, when pushed forward is reined back and comes to rest again. Wherefore in the [atoms]

too you must need allow likewise that there is another cause of motion besides blows and weights, whence comes this power born in us, since we see that nothing can come to pass from nothing. For weight prevents all things coming to pass by blows, as by some force without. But that very mind feels not some necessity within in doing all things, and is not constrained like a conquered thing to bear and suffer, this is brought about by the tiny swerve of the first-beginnings in no determined direction of place and at no determined time, Lucret ii 272-293).

By analogy, a valid method of proof in Epicureanism, if a man can resist the compulsory movement forced upon him by the blow and weight of another man, atoms too are able. This innate ability to resist and influence one's own movement is enough proof for the Epicureans of the 'swerve' which atoms make when colliding with other atoms. While this acts as an evident proof of the 'swerve', it is the 'swerve' of the atoms which actually makes free-will possible, as it gives atoms and ultimately compounds of atoms to 'initiate a new movement' (Long 59). To consider the opposing case, if atoms do not 'swerve', and are moving along a predetermined path at a constant speed, all events (which are caused by the natural movement of atoms) would be predetermined and mankind might feel helpless at the mercy of a higher power. If atoms 'swerved' at times and places undetermined, than how can a voluntary movement happen at will? Bailey postulates that Epicureans believe that the 'swerve' occurs very frequently, whether asleep or awake. Other recent scholars also believe that Epicureans consider the 'swerve' of one atom in a man sufficient to make a free decision (Bailey 60). This is one of the most controversial facets of Epicureanism and no clear explanation of the 'swerve' has survived. It is clear, however, the concept of the 'swerve' is in order to dispel determinism and give man the freedom to choose his own actions in the pursuit of tranquility.

The Pursuit of Pleasure and Happiness

Many ancient philosophers, including Aristotle and Plato, seek to define happiness. It is only Epicurus who associates happiness with ‘a life full of pleasure’ (Long 62). This idea rests on Epicurus’ belief that ‘all living creatures from the moment of birth take delight in pleasure and resist pain from natural causes independent of reason’ (D.L. x 137). According to Epicurus, it is an innate truth that men will seek what is pleasurable and avoid what is painful. However, he is not so extreme to believe that man might seek *every* pleasure and avoid *every* pain. Instead, the pursuit of pleasure is a careful calculation of the pros and cons of seeking one pleasure versus another, choosing (or not choosing) a pleasure that may lead to pain, and avoiding one pain versus another (Long 63). In the Epicurean world, the mind has two states: pain and pleasure. Epicurus defines pleasure both as ‘bodily sensations and feelings of elation’ and also having good health. To have good health means that the location and movement of atoms within the body are in working order, and if disturbed, cause a sensation of pain (Long 64).

Pleasure, which is to be sought after, ought to be defined by the Epicureans not as some enjoyment such as a multitude of wealth or sexual act but as a bodily pleasure, such as relieving the body from hunger or thirst. The pleasure of this relief is the well-being of the mind and body and therefore the absence of pain. Wealth and sex are still considered pleasures, but not ones to be considered a goal of a body seeking proper alignment of the atoms in the mind and body (Long 65).

One may also wonder what it means for the body to be experiencing no sensation of pleasure or pain. To the Epicureans, the absence of all pain is a sensation of pleasure. These pleasures can be ‘static’, such as the feeling after fulfilling a desire when the body

is freed from pain, or 'kinetic', such as the act of fulfilling that desire during the time of feeling that pain (Long 65). For example, a 'static' pleasure is the feeling of fullness after feeling hungry. The 'kinetic' pleasure is the pleasure felt while eating a meal while feeling that same hunger.

The greatest pleasure of them all is a properly functioning mind and body. The greatest pain is the anxiety caused by 'false beliefs about the nature of things, about the gods, [and] about the soul's destiny' (which have already been discussed) (Long 66). Pleasure rests in the natural desire of a man to dispel pain. Natural desires include things like food and clothing. Epicurus believes that one should fill these desires by any means, and that one fulfillment should not be chosen over another if the former is sufficient (Long 67). This means that mankind should live 'a simple life' not seeking to fulfill desires by luxurious means, as this itself can cause pain. Epicurus, in his *Letters to Menoeceus*, says living a simple life 'makes us better disposed to encounter luxuries at intervals and prepares us to face change without fear.'

Clearly a hedonistic philosophy, Epicurus' pursuit of pleasure is very self-regarding. This became a major criticism of others like Cicero as it is anti-social and displayed no regard for the good of the state. Epicurus does not ignore social interaction, however, which is the subject of the final facet of Epicureanism.

Social Interactions

Epicurus does not agree with other Greek philosophers who believe that the individual and community are linked in the pursuit of happiness. He does not think community is innate in mankind, rather something developed by evolution and

experience seeking to provide mutual advantages and to relieve pain. Friendships develop after certain advantageous discoveries, such as clothing, fire, and family life, seeking to do no harm nor receive it (Long 70). Out of this concept, the Epicurus' concept of justice is born.

Justice to the Epicureans is a contract between two parties to do no harm and to receive no harm. Epicurus' position on justice follows: injustice is only a bad thing because of the fear it causes of being caught, and no one can ever be completely confident that he will not be caught; when man creates a law that is not advantageous in human relationships, it is not just; a just man is free from trouble (Long 70). This justice, however, is only to be followed if it is 'advantageous to all parties concerned... but the basis of this recognition is self-interest,' as one should ultimately be concerned with his well-being (Long 71). Returning to injustice, to Epicurus, this is not a bad thing if it does not cause the fear of being apprehended. This anxiety causes pain, and according to his doctrine on pain and pleasure, it should be avoided.

Epicurus calls political life a 'desire for protection from men,' therefore the only salvation is a 'quiet life in retirement from public affairs'; however, Epicurus does not denounce friendship in the least. In fact, he holds friendship in high esteem claiming 'none is greater or more productive or more delightful than friendship' (Long 71). Epicurus' Garden, the meetinghouse of his philosophy's constituents, is certainly a community of friends. Epicureans find friendship as an intense source of happiness and Epicurus himself is famous for 'philanthropy' to all (Long 72). Still friendship is to be considered with self-interest: 'One can enjoy or derive pleasure from helping a friend independently of any tangible benefit which this brings' (Long 72), and it is more

pleasurable to give help than to receive it. Pleasure for one's own sake seems to be the backbone behind the decisions of any Epicurean.

It is ethics for which Epicurus is most likely to have preferred to be remembered. He seeks to guide mankind in a way which keeps them free of any external or internal pain and filled with the greatest pleasures. In an age filled with political and monetary ambition, Epicurus in a way seeks to put everyone on a level playing field. Cicero argued for a unified state, one which time and time again can be viewed to require different classes of citizens, some poor, some wealthy. If the followers of Plato and Aristotle seek the good of all through the good of the state, why are only the politically successful so wealthy? If anything, Epicurus' society of self-interest seems to yield the most pleasurable life for all citizens. If he can remove the desire for luxurious pleasures, and define pleasure as a healthy and balanced life free from pain, more people might live a pleasurable life. Further, he does not denounce friendship and is an avid philanthropist, crediting much happiness to the company of his friends. I find this to be hardly reclusive and largely beneficial to all parties.

CHAPTER 2

Cicero's Criticism of Epicurean Ethics

Introduction

Most of Epicurus' works do not survive him. In fact, much of what we know of his philosophy today is from secondhand written accounts – those of his followers and those of his critics. One of the most vocal critics of Epicureanism is Cicero. Much of his disagreement with the school probably stemmed from two of his characteristics. First, he is an Academic Skeptic, whose purpose in the field of philosophy is to prove everything else untrue and affirm nothing as a truth. Cicero stated himself: 'nam cum Academicis incerta luctatio est, qui nihil affirmant' (for there is no coming to grips with the Academics, who affirm nothing, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 43). The Academic school does nothing to advance knowledge of the public, especially on topics which many want answers. Second, he is a Platonist, so he believes by the natural virtue of humans, all have a civic duty to their fellow-countrymen and their state. Seeking to revive Greek tradition in Roman politics (Smethurst 111), he naturally finds issue with Epicureanism, whose chief ethical principles require one act almost always in self-interest.

It is not entirely devastating to philosophy that Cicero undertakes the task of translating Greek philosophy into Latin. He is credited with developing much of the Latin philosophical vocabulary, essential for the Roman people to understand the Greek philosophy (Conte 199). Cicero considers the translation of the philosophies into Latin an honor to the language, needing adequate defenses for pursuing a task which most of his peers feel was entirely unnecessary, arduous, and beneath the politician:

Postremo aliquos futuros suspicor qui me ad alias litteras vocent, genus hoc scribendi, etsi sit elegans, personae tamen et dignitatis esse negent.

(I suspect there will be some who will wish to divert me to other fields of authorship, asserting that this kind of composition, though a graceful recreation, is beneath the dignity of my character and position, Cic. *Fin.* i. 1).

Quamquam si plane sic verterem Platonem aut Aristotelem ut verterunt nostri poetae fabulas, male, credo, mererer de meis civibus si ad eorum.

(Yet even supposing I gave a direct translation of Plato or Aristotle, exactly as our poets have done with the plays, would it not, pray, be a patriotic service to introduce those transcendent intellects to the acquaintance of my fellow-countrymen? Cic. *Fin.* i. 7).

Regardless of the pressure he receives, Cicero has the time and energy to complete this task, his political career slowing down (Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.7).

Cicero is learned in all of the philosophical schools he debates, having travelled to Greece at a young age to hear from their spokesmen (Rackham *Fin.* viii). He recognizes all that philosophy attempted to answer about ethics:

...qui sit finis, quid extremum, quid ultimum quo sint omnia bene vivendi recteque faciendi consilia referenda; quid sequatur natura ut summum ex rebus expetendis, quid fugiat ut extremum malorum?

(...what is the End, the final and ultimate aim, which gives the standard for all principles of right living and of good conduct? What does Nature pursue as the thing supremely desirable, what does she avoid as the ultimate evil? Cic. *Fin.* i. 11).

Still, I do not believe he is the proper candidate to deliver Epicurean ethics and theology to the Roman public given his obvious bias. While others, such as Lucretius, were also attempting to deliver understanding to the Romans, none have the public standing of Cicero. He has the popularity, star-power, and charisma that inexplicitly demands he be the chief translator (Smethurst 111). Cicero, however, has more in mind for the Greek philosophies:

Quid si nos non interpretum fungimur munere, sed tuemer ea quae dicta sunt ab iis

quos probamus, eisque nostrum iudicium et nostrum scribendi ordinem adiungimus?

(And supposing that for our part we do not fill the office of a mere translator, but, while preserving the doctrines of our chosen authorities, add thereto our own criticism and our own arrangement, Cic. *Fin.* i. 6).

Suppose that Cicero does 'preserve the doctrines of the chosen authorities', why is it that he has to subsequently debate them? This clearly gives rise to bias, not only in debate, but also in the account of the philosophy. The following sections will summarize and analyze Cicero's delivery of Epicurean ethics and theology.

Summary and Analysis of Cicero's *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*

In his series titled, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, or *On the ends of Goods and Evils*, Cicero is to explain different philosophical schools of thought on the 'Chief Good' and 'Chief Evil' of the human race. The first two books deal with Epicurean ethics and their preference of *pleasure* as the 'Chief Good'. Book One, is Cicero's record of Lucius Manlius Torquatus (referred to as Torquatus) explaining Epicurean ethics as well as an introduction to Epicureanism by Cicero. Torquatus, himself a politician, is not the proper account of Epicureanism as according to Epicurus, 'political life is a rat-race or "prison" from which the wise man will keep well clear' (Long 71). Regardless, he gives an almost completely accurate account of Epicurean ethics. It is common practice of Cicero to set up his books as dramatic dialogues (he does the same with *De Natura Deorum*), so it should be noted that much of what Torquatus says may very well be Cicero's own thoughts. The second book is simply Cicero's rebuttal to Torquatus' discourse, in which notable fallacies regarding Epicureanism can be noted.

Book 1

Book 1 begins with Cicero's various reasons and defenses for undertaking philosophy in writing. His understanding of Epicureanism does not begin until section 17, where he argues the natural philosophy, or physics, of Epicurus (which is entirely off-topic). He believes that Epicurean physics is a complete replication of Democritus' theory with a few modifications, which he thinks exist only to worsen the credibility of the theory (Cic. *Fin.* i. 17). Here he is referring to atomism, of which Epicurus certainly based his physics, having been associated with Nausiphanes, a Democritean, on the

island of Teos (Long 15), and the swerve, which was an invention of Epicurus' (Long 37). Cicero subsequently describes accurately what atomism and the swerve entailed.

His blunders occur, however, in debating the swerve:

Quae cum res tota ficta sit pueriliter, tum ne efficit quidem quod vult. Name et ipsa declinatio ad libidinem fingitur (ait enim declinare atomum sine cause, quo nihil turpius physico quam fieri quidquam sine causa dicere)... Nam si omnes atomi declinabunt, nullae umquam cohaerescunt; sive aliae declinabunt, aliae suo nutu recte ferentur, primum erit hoc quasi provincias atomis dare, quae recte, quae oblique ferantur, deinde eadem illa atomorum... turbulenta concursio hunc mundi ornatum efficere non poterit.

(Now not only is the whole of this affair a piece of childish fancy, but it does not even achieve the result that its author desires. The swerving is itself an arbitrary fiction; for Epicurus says the atoms swerve without a cause, yet this is the capital offence in a natural philosopher, to speak of something taking place uncaused... For, if all the atoms swerve, none will ever come to cohere together; or if some swerve while others travel in a straight line, at their own will and pleasure, in the first place this will be tantamount to assigning to the atoms their different spheres of authority, some travel straight and some sideways... this riotous hurly-burly of atoms could not possibly result in the ordered beauty of the world we know, Cic. *Fin.* i. 19-20).

First, Epicureans had a proof for the swerve of the atoms (discussed on page 13), in which they believe that because our mind and body have an innate ability to resist movement in a particular direction, so must atoms; in fact, that ability on the atomic level is the reason for that ability of the mind and soul. However logical a proof this was, it still is an attempt at an explanation which Cicero ignored. Next, Cicero said, 'if all the atoms swerve, non will ever come to cohere together'. Even if the Epicureans overlook this, the very nature of the swerve is invented to be a proof of collision:

quod nisi declinare solerent, omnia deorsum
imbris uti guttae caderent per inane profundum
nec foret offensus natus nec plaga creata
principiis; ita nihil umquam natura creasset.

(But if they were not used to swerve, all things would fall downwards through the deep void like drops of rain, nor could collision come to be, nor a blow brought to

pass for the first-beginnings: so nature would never have brought aught to being, Lucret ii 221-224).

Lastly, why is it not possible that atoms each have their own ‘spheres of authority’?

Granting their accuracy, Epicureans believe that atoms have different bulk and shape because of their innumerability:

nec mirum; nam cum sit eorum copia tanta,
ut neque finis, uti docui, neque summa sit ulla,
debent ni mirum non omnibus omnia prorsum
esse pari filo similique adfecta figura.

(Nor need we wonder; for since there is so great a store of them, that neither have they any limit, as I have shown, nor any sum, it must needs be, we may be sure, that they are not all of equal bulk nor possessed of the same shape, Lucret ii 338-341).

This diversity in atoms is not only accounted for in their innumerability, but also proven by the fact that there are distinct and diverse individuals in the same species (Lucret ii 342-351).

After attacking Epicurus’ intelligence and style, Cicero arrives at Epicurean ethics, which is centered on the preference of *pleasure* and avoidance of *pain*. Alluding to one of Torquatus’ ancestors, Cicero argues that killing others and one’s own son is inconsistent with the pursuit of *pleasure*:

...ita prorsus existimo, neque eum Torquatum qui hoc primus cognomen invenit aut torquem illum hosti detraxisse ut aliquam ex eo perciperet corpore voluptatem aut cum Latinis tertio consulatu conflixisse apud Vesperim propter voluptatem. Quod vero securi percussit filium, privavisse se etiam videtur multis voluptatibus, cum ipsi naturae patrioque amori praetulerit ius maiestatis atque imperi.

(...I am absolutely convinced that the Torquatus who first won that surname did not wrest the famous necklet from his foe in the hope of getting from it any physical enjoyment, nor did he fight the battle of the Vesperis against the Latins in his third consulship for the sake of pleasure. Indeed in sentencing his son to be beheaded, it would seem that he actually deprived himself of a great deal of pleasure; for he sacrificed his natural instincts of paternal affection to the claims of state and of his military office, Cic. *Fin.* i. 23).

As stated before, someone not upholding Epicurean doctrines should not be judged as an Epicurean. Torquatus' ancestor is a political and military figure, something Epicurus advises against because of the experience of pain that may result (Lucret ii 5-6). Cicero goes on to provide other examples of other political figures making choices that clearly are not pleasurable. While this certainly proves Cicero's point, these individuals have already performed a cardinal offense against Epicureanism: joining the political realm. Still Torquatus upholds these actions later as an act of self-preservation and self-interest:

Torquem detraxit hosti. -- Et quidem se texit, ne interiret. -- At magnum periculum adiit. -- In oculis quidem exercitus. -- Quid ex eo est consecutus? -- Laudem et caritatem, quae sunt vitae sine metu degendae praesidia firmissima.

(He wrested the necklet from his foe. – Yes, and saved himself from death – But he braved great danger – Yes, before the eyes of an army – What did he get by it? – Honor and esteem, the strongest guarantees of security in life, Cic. *Fin.* i. 35).

Cicero and other Platonists call this virtue – something explained on the next page – Epicureans root this response in pleasure.

Cicero's final trouble with Epicureanism in Book 1 is the topic of 'goodness' and its relation to human nature:

Nam si concederetur, etiamsi ad corpus nihil referatur, ista sua sponte et per se esse iucunda, per se esset et virtus et cognitio rerum, quod minime ille vult expetenda

(If it were admitted that goodness is spontaneously and intrinsically pleasant, even without any reference to bodily feeling, then virtue would be desirable for its own sake, and so also would knowledge; but this Epicurus by no means allows, Cic. *Fin.* i. 25)

Plato and Aristotle hold virtue, an innate civic duty and pursuit of honor, to the highest esteem, something Epicurus does not agree with (Long 69). Epicurus merely does not want to call this virtue. He considered friendship in and of itself to be desirable, because 'it was more pleasant to confer a benefit than to receive it' (Long 72). The apparent act

of ‘goodness’ to Epicurus is due to self-interest and not to an innate feature of humans. Epicurus does not allow what Cicero spoke of because ‘absolute [goodness] does not exist. There were only mutual agreements among men, made at various times and places not to inflict nor allow harm’ (*K. D.* xxxiii). Cicero makes this statement and many like it to make Epicureanism ultimately seem to promote anarchy and no regard for fellow countrymen, but Epicurus in fact was a devout philanthropist and praised friendship arguably higher than anything else (Long 72). Again, although this does not seem selfish, to Epicurus, this relationship existed out of self-interest. Cicero’s tactic of appealing to popular opinion and misconstruing Epicurean notions as obvious evils carries through to Book 2, however, at this point in Book 1, Torquatus is awarded the opportunity of a discourse.

Torquatus’ discourse is almost flawless regarding its accuracy, establishing the main Epicurean facets: the greatest pleasure and ‘Chief Good’ is the absence of pain (*Cic. Fin.* i. 37), there exists no neutral state between pleasure and pain (*Cic. Fin.* i. 38), fear of death and fear of a supernatural power ought to be disregarded (*Cic. Fin.* i. 40-41), necessary and natural desires are fulfilled easily (*Cic. Fin.* i. 45), men without temperance succumb to pleasures which lead to pain and men with temperance experience greater pleasures (*Cic. Fin.* i. 47-48), justice exists to bring mutual benefit and no harm, injustice is evil in itself because it brings more loss than gain (*Cic. Fin.* i. 50-53), everything that Cicero lists as virtues (justice, temperance, courage, and wisdom) is traceable to the pursuit of pleasure, making it the ‘Chief Good’ (*Cic. Fin.* i. 54), and luxuries cause pain and ought to be avoided (*Cic. Fin.* i. 59-60).

Torquatus does misrepresent Epicureanism in a few ways, however. First, he

contends with zeal that pleasures and pains of the mind resulted from those of the body:

Animi autem voluptates et dolores nasci fatemur e corporis voluptatibus et doloribus (itaque concedo, quod modo dicebas, cadere causa, si qui e nostris aliter existimant, quos quidem video esse multos, sed imperitos) quamquam autem et laetitiam nobis voluptas animi et molestiam dolor afferat, eorum tamen utrumque et ortum esse e corpore et ad corpus referri.

Again, we aver that mental pleasures and pains arise out of bodily ones (and therefore I allow your contention that any Epicureans who think otherwise put themselves out of court; and I am aware that many do, though not those who can speak with authority); but although men do experience mental pleasure that is agreeable and mental pain that is annoying, yet both of these arise out of and are based upon bodily sensations, Cic. *Fin.* i. 55).

Epicurus never insists that mental pleasure or pain was a function of bodily pleasure or pain. This, on Torquatus' part, is a gross overstatement. In fact, Epicurus thinks the greatest pain is one that started and only effected the mind, 'he holds that the greatest pain is mental disturbance produced by false beliefs about the nature of things, about the gods, about the soul's destiny (Long 66).

The Epicureans, as far as the available sources tell us, do not readily advocate suicide. Torquatus, in an otherwise eloquent summary of Epicureanism says, 'non dubitat, si ita melius sit, migrare de vita' (if it be expedient to depart from life, he does not hesitate to do so, Cic. *Fin.* i. 62). This is a clear folly of Torquatus' because it assumes that a man would take his own life if he foretold that he would experience more pain in the future than pleasure. This is an anxiety or fear, a state of mind which the Epicureans warn against. Epicurus teaches not to fear death but in no case does he teach to seek it. On his own deathbed, he continued to write to his friends, full aware of his impending death (Long 72).

In the same summary of Epicureanism, Torquatus commits another mistake. He

insists, ‘cum stultorum vitam cum sua comparat, magna afficitur voluptate’ ([the Wise Man] derives no inconsiderable pleasure from comparing his own existence with the life of the foolish, Cic. *Fin.* i. 62). Lucretius begins his second book with the following:

Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis
 e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;
 non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,
 sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suavest.

(Sweet it is, when on the great sea the winds are buffeting the waters, to gaze from the land on another’s great struggles; not because it is pleasure or joy that any one should be distressed, but because it is sweet to perceive from what misfortune you yourself are free, Lucret ii 1-4).

Consistent with Epicureanism, freedom from pain is a pleasure, and something that reminds one of a certain freedom from pain ought to excite a pleasurable sensation of the mind, or a ‘static’ pleasure as Torquatus illustrated himself (Long 69).

Torquatus’ final folly, as told by Cicero, occurs while Torquatus is explaining knowledge’s origin in sensation:

Quidquid porro animo cernimus, id omne oritur a sensibus; qui si omnes veri erunt, ut Epicuri ratio docet, tum denique poterit aliquid cognosci et percipi.

(Further, every mental presentation has its origin in sensation; so that no knowledge or perception is possible, unless all sensations are true, as the theory of Epicurus teaches that they are, Cic. *Fin.* i. 64).

Epicurus places a great deal of reliance on sensations for accurate images of the physical world but submits to the fact that the atoms traveling from the object being observed could become disturbed and thus give an inaccurate portrayal of the original object (Long 22).

Book 2

Book 2 begins as a dialogue between Cicero and Torquatus and ends with Cicero’s discourse against Epicureanism. Cicero starts by determining the ‘preamble’ of the

discussion: debating the ‘End of Goods’ (Cic. *Fin.* ii. 4). He gives to Torquatus that he, and therefore the Epicureans, has defined ‘End’ correctly:

...id esse, quo omnia, quae recte fierent, referrentur neque id ipsum usquam referretur.

(that to which all right actions are a means while it is not itself a means to anything else, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 5).

Cicero subsequently assumes that, had he been asked to do so, Torquatus would have defined ‘Good’ as ‘the naturally desirable’ (Cic. *Fin.* ii. 5), which is sufficient. Next, he demands Torquatus define *pleasure*, the very thing that the Epicureans have deemed the ‘End of Goods’. When Torquatus refuses, claiming everyone understands its definition, Cicero asserts that ‘Epicurus himself did not know what pleasure was, but was in two minds about it’ (Cic. *Fin.* ii. 6). He arrives at this conclusion by the following points:

Hieronymus Rhodius...dicat esse summum bonum...nihil dolere... Negat esse eam...propter se expetendam... Aliud [censet] esse censet gaudere, aliud non dolere.

(...Hieronymus of Rhodes pronounces to be the Chief Good... freedom from pain... He thinks that pleasure is not desirable in itself... to feel pleasure is a different thing from not feeling pain, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 8-9).

This is hardly a proof that ‘freedom from pain’ and ‘pleasure’ are different things because it is the opinion of another philosopher with a differing viewpoint, yet Cicero claims only someone with extraordinary contention thinks they are the same after this (Cic. *Fin.* 9). Torquatus is asked whether, when thirsty, the pleasure between the act of drinking and the feeling after having quenched one’s thirst is the same, to which he replies:

Immo alio genere. Restincta enim sitis stabilitatem voluptatis habet, illa autem voluptas ipsius restinctionis in motu est.

(No, it is a different kind of pleasure. For the pleasure of having quenched one’s thirst is a ‘static’ pleasure, but the pleasure of actually quenching it is a ‘kinetic’ pleasure, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 9).

This distinction between ‘static’ and ‘kinetic’ pleasures troubles Cicero, who earlier complains of Epicurus’ lack of classification (Cic. *Fin.* i. 22). How is it that here he does not allow for different classifications of pleasure? Cicero goes on to define the meaning of pleasure, using other philosopher’s definitions of the word (Cic. *Fin.* ii. 10-15).

Finally, returning to Hieronymus’ view of ‘freedom from pain’ as the ‘Chief Good’, Cicero questions why Epicurus insists on calling this ‘pleasure’ and not ‘freedom from pain’. Although there is no existing response to this, one can be implied by other thoughts of the Epicureans. Epicurus thinks that the ‘Chief Good’ should be a stand-alone sensation, not one rooted in another. His problem with calling ‘Virtues’ the ‘Chief Good’ is that he believes the ‘Virtues’ were rooted in pleasure (discussed on page 25). To say that the ‘Chief Good’ is ‘freedom from pain’ roots the ‘Chief Good’ in pain, rather than something apparently ‘Good’ to the senses – pleasure. He views certain ‘kinetic’ pleasures (such as eating) as removing pain (such as hunger), resulting in a feeling of satiety. This satiety is a pleasure to the senses, because the mind and body are pleased by the fact that the individual’s entire atomic structure is in harmony (Long 64).

Soon after, the debate is interrupted as Torquatus reminds Cicero that the conversation is supposed to unfold in a rhetorical matter, not in a dialectic one (Cic. *Fin.* ii. 17). From this point, Cicero engages in an almost entirely uninterrupted discourse. Quoting the *Kuriai Doxai*, or Epicurus’ *Principal Doctrines*, Cicero next finds fault with the treatment of sensualists:

Si ea quae sunt luxuriosis efficientia voluptatum, liberarent eos deorum et mortis et doloris metu docerentque qui essent fines cupiditatum, nihil haberemus quod reprehenderemus, cum undique complerentur voluptatibus nec haberent ulla ex parte aliquid aut dolens aut aegrum, id est autem malum.

(If the things in which sensualists find pleasure could deliver them from the fear of the gods and of death and pain, and could teach them to set bounds to their desires, we should have no reason to blame them, since on every hand they would be abundantly supplied with pleasures, and on no side would be exposed to any pain or grief, which are the sole evil, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 21; *K. D.* x)

For a brief moment, Cicero ignores that Epicurus mentioned desires should be kept within bounds and worries that this might promote anarchy:

Atqui reperiemus asotos primum ita non religiosos, ut edint de patella, deinde ita mortem non timentes, ut illud in ore habeant ex Hymnide.

(Yet we shall find profligates in the first place so devoid of religious scruples that they will ‘eat the food on the paten,’ and secondly so fearless of death as to be always quoting the lines from the *Hymnis*, Cic, *Fin.* ii. 22)

Cicero once again uses examples to refute Epicurean doctrine that themselves are rendered void by Epicurean doctrine. Man owes no tribute to gods as the gods do nothing for humans according to Epicurus. If a man is caught ‘eating the food on the paten’, in the eyes of Epicurus, he is acting in order to remove the pain of hunger. The *Principal Doctrines* are to be taken not as stand-alone rules but as a comprehensive guidebook, to ignore the others may render a single one as heresy. Cicero says that parricides ought to be free from blame according to doctrine 10 of *Principal Doctrines*, but that ignores doctrine 31, ‘Natural justice is the advantage conferred by mutual agreements not to inflict nor allow harm’. It is not fair to take ideals out of context in order to excite negative emotions from the readers. Cicero continues to do this throughout his discourse.

The same doctrine from the *Kuriai Doxai* continues to be criticized in the same way for several chapters with Cicero again alluding to many philosophers’ views on the topic. He then begins nit-picking, calling Epicurus’ classifications of desires illogical:

Tria genera cupiditatum, naturales et necessariae, naturales et non necessariae, nec naturales nec necessariae.' primum divisit ineleganter; duo enim genera quae erant, fecit tria. hoc est non dividere, sed frangere. qui haec didicerunt, quae ille contemnit, sic solent: 'Duo genera cupiditatum, naturales et inanes, naturalium duo, necessariae et non necessariae.

([Epicurus'] desires are of three kinds, natural and necessary, natural but not necessary, neither natural nor necessary. To begin with, this is a clumsy division; it makes three classes when there are really only two. This is not dividing but hacking in pieces. Thinkers trained in the science which Epicurus despised usually put it thus: The desires are of two kinds, natural and imaginary; natural desires again fall into two subdivisions, necessary and not necessary, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 26).

It is hard to find much difference between the two styles of classification, but this extends Cicero's strategy of polemic discourse in order to portray Epicurus as unlearned. This is not the first time Cicero makes reference to Epicurus being uneducated. Returning to his point, Cicero attacks the morality of Epicurus' desire and its freedom from blame:

Quis est enim, in quo sit cupiditas, quin recte cupidus dici possit? ergo et avarus erit, sed finite, et adulter, verum habebit modum, et luxuriosus eodem modo. qualis ista philosophia est, quae non interitum afferat pravitatis, sed sit contenta mediocritate vitiorum?

(On your principle there is no form of desire whose possessor could not be morally approved. He will be a miser – within limits; an adulterer – in moderation; a sensualist – to the same extent. What sort of a philosophy is this, that instead of dealing wickedness its death-blow, is satisfied with moderating our vices? Cic. *Fin.* ii. 27).

Epicurus does not deny that eating good food, sexual pleasures and other worldly luxuries are sources of pleasure, but these 'he rejected as goals because they did not constitute a calm and stable disposition of body and mind' (Long 65-66). Even in the doctrine which Cicero quotes, Epicurus urges individuals to place boundaries on desires, yet Cicero continues to ignore this. This becomes the basis of many of Cicero's arguments that follow:

Luxuriam non reprendit, modo sit vacua infinita cupiditate et timore.

(He does not censure profligacy provided it be free from unbridled desire, and from fear of consequences, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 30).

...nulla turpis voluptas erit quae praetermittenda sit...

(...no pleasure will be too base to be accepted, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 31).

Quarum ambarum rerum cum medicinam pollicetur, luxuriae licentiam pollicetur. His enim rebus detractis negat se reperire in asotorum vita quod repretat.

(And, as he offers an antidote for both desire and fear, he virtually offers free indulgence for sensuality. Eliminate those passions, he says, and he cannot find anything to blame in a life of profligacy, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 70).

These arguments cannot be treated as fair as they have ignored what even Cicero admits Epicurus had said. Epicureans are different from the hedonists Cicero associates them with in that their pleasure comes from simplifying their lives and avoiding pain (Rawson 283). Other erroneous conclusions can be drawn from this fallacy:

Occultum facinus esse potuerit, gaudebit; deprehensus omnem poenam contemnet. Erit enim instructus ad mortem contemnendam, ad exilium, ad ipsum etiam dolorem.

(Similarly, your Epicurean Wise Man, when stirred by the prospect of some considerable gain, will fight to the death, if need be, and with good reason. Do circumstances allow his crime to go undetected, so much the better; but if found out, he will make light of every penalty. For he will have been schooled to make light of death, of exile, even of pain itself, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 57).

Here, Cicero makes Epicureanism out to be a promoter of anarchy. It becomes an excuse in order to commit a crime. This conclusion may have stemmed from the 34th of the *Principal Doctrines*: ‘Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the accompanying fear of being unable to escape those assigned to punish unjust acts’ (*K. D.* xxxiv). Epicurus believes that crimes should not be committed because of the anxiety of being caught that they cause, and not because it is wrong. Cicero misconstrues this to mean that if an individual will not be caught, he is not committing an injustice. If he had only read the next principal, ‘It is not possible for one who secretly violates the provisos

of the agreement not to inflict nor allow harm to be confident that he won't get caught, even if he has gotten away with it a thousand times before. For up until the time of death, there is no certainty that he will indeed escape detection' (*K. D.* xxxv), he would have realized that the same philosophy states that no one is free from this anxiety. Again, he takes doctrines out of context in order to set up an illegitimate argument.

Friendship, as Epicurus put it, is confusing to Cicero. To Epicureans, performing a favor for a friend is still an act of self-regard even if it does not provide a tangible benefit, as the favor an individual performs creates a pleasure, especially when compared to receiving a favor (Long 72). Cicero insists on calling this duty:

...none intellegas eo maiorem vim esse naturae quod ipsi vos, qui omnia ad vestrum commodum et ut ipsi dicitis ad voluptatem referatis, tamen ea faciatis e quibus appareat non voluptatem vos sed officium sequi.

(...do you not see that the force of natural instinct is all the more firmly established by the fact that even you Epicureans, who profess to make your own interest and pleasure your sole standard, nevertheless perform actions that prove you to be really aiming not at pleasure but at duty, *Cic. Fin.* ii. 58).

Cicero believes that actions towards friends have nothing to do with pleasure and self-interest, rather an innate civic duty. Further, Cicero thinks that the actions of the Epicureans are greater than their words:

ac mihi quidem, quod et ipse bonus vir fuit et multi Epicurei et fuerunt et hodie sunt et in amicitiiis fideles et in omni vita constantes et graves nec voluptate, sed officio consilia moderantes, hoc videtur maior vis honestatis et minor voluptatis. ita enim vivunt quidam, ut eorum vita refellatur oratio. atque ut ceteri dicere existimantur melius quam facere, sic hi mihi videntur facere melius quam dicere.

(And to my mind the fact that Epicurus himself was a good man and that many Epicureans both have been and today are loyal to their friends, consistent and high-principled throughout their lives, ruling their conduct by duty and not by pleasure, - all this does but enforce the value of moral goodness and diminish that of pleasure. The fact is that some persons' lives and behavior refute the principles they profess. Most men's words are thought to be better than their deeds, these people's deeds on

the contrary seem to me better than their words, Cic. *Fin.* ii. 81).

Yet on his deathbed, Epicurus writes to his friend Idomeneus speaking of all the pleasure that the memories of their friendship and conversations has brought him (Long 72).

These pleasures, as well as the others previously discussed (pleasure of helping a friend, rather than receiving help) are the origin by which Epicurus believed friendship developed.

The remaining parts of the book are a detailed discourse of why a life of seeking excellence in the eyes of the population trumps a quiet, reserved, simple life. It is not explicitly a rebuttal to Epicurean beliefs, rather a way in which Cicero attempts to prove why his philosophy is the best. His misconceptions regarding Epicurean ethics, especially how it relates to conduct among a community, leads him to fear anarchy from a society who regards it as the truth. A great deal of verbiage is used to attack the *ethos* of Epicurus rather than the content of his beliefs. Not only is he deemed uneducated by Cicero, but he is also accused of poorly defining concepts. Cicero often quoted Epicurus verbatim, a powerful weapon when his words were taken out of context; he would have done justice to quote all of the related concepts in order to give a full understanding – the proclaimed purpose of the books.

Summary and Analysis of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*

Cicero spends much of his life practicing law and oratory and engaging in the politics of ancient Rome. In the period of the First Triumvirate he turns his attention to developing a Roman understanding of many of the Greek schools of philosophy. Cicero states he does this for a number of reasons, mentioned in the first book of *De Natura Deorum*. The most obvious is that the Latin language and Rome is missing a comprehensive corpus of philosophy. A second reason is that Cicero does not have a political role to play in the republic, which is undergoing political change under the reign of Julius Caesar. Philosophy, to him, is a fitting substitute and the nature of the gods is a perfect undertaking because of something he says himself:

nam et de figuris deorum et de locis atque sedibus et de actione vitae multa dicuntur, deque eis summa philosophorum dissensione certatur.

(For much is said concerning the shapes of the gods, their location and dwelling-place, and way of life, and concerning these it is debated with the highest difference of opinions among philosophers, *Cic. nat. deor.* 1.2).

As a member of the Academic school of philosophy, Cicero takes a dialogic approach to this argument, hearing both sides of the story. The first philosophy that Cicero debates in *De Natura Deorum* is Epicureanism, as told by Gaius Velleius. In the first book, set up as a dramatic dialogue, Gaius Aurelius Cotta acts as a Skeptic to the Epicurean views of Velleius, while Quintus Lucilius Balbus, a Stoic, and Cicero act as listeners. In this section, I examine the main features of Epicurean philosophy, and the strength of Cotta's arguments in debating those views. Much like *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, the criticisms and arguments in this book can be assumed to belong to Cicero.

Velleius' account of the school of Epicurus begins with the doctrine of *prolepsis*, introduced first in chapter 43:

quae est enim gens aut quod genus hominum quod non habeat sine doctrina anticipationem quondam deorum, quam appellat *prolepsis* Epicurus id est anteceptam animo rei quondam informationem.

(For what nation or race of men is there that does not possess without instruction a certain perception of the gods, which Epicurus calls *prolepsis*, that is, a certain idea of a thing preconceived by the mind, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.43b).

The idea of *prolepsis* is that every man is born with some notion of a divine being, having received sensations and images of them directly into their mind (concept explained on page 3 and 4). The Epicureans also believe that if the entire humanity agrees on a topic, it must be true:

Maneatque ad unum omnium firma consensio, intellegi necesse est esse deos, quoniam insitas eorum vel potius innatas cognitiones habemus; de quo autem omnium natura consentit, id verum esse necesse est.

(A firm consensus of all men remains on one point, it is necessary to understand that the gods exist, since we hold knowledge of them implanted, or rather innate; of which the nature of all men agrees, it is necessary that it is true, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.44).

What faults do the Skeptics find with *prolepsis*? Cotta asks how Velleius knows the opinions of every nation, 'primum enim unde tibi notae sunt opinions nationum?' (for first, how are the opinions of [all] nations known to you? Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.63). Cotta also alludes to sophists (some of which Velleius himself alludes to) that publicly denounce the existence of gods. Protagoras of Abdera is exiled from Athens and his books are burned for not admitting to the existence of the gods. From this Cotta believes that people give

the appearance of believing in the gods in order to avoid punishment. This is all explained in the following passage:

Nam Abderites quidem Protagoras, cuius a te modo mentio facta est, sophistes temporibus illis vel maximus, cum in principio libri sic posuisset 'de divis neque ut sint neque ut non sint habeo dicere,' Atheniensium iussu urbe atque agro est exterminatus librique eius in contione combusti; ex quo equidem existimo tardiores ad hanc sententiam profitendam multos esse factos, quippe cum poenam ne dubitatio quidem effugere potuisset.

(For indeed Protagoras of Abdera, who was now just made mention of by you, the greatest sophist of those times, because he stated in the beginning of his book, 'About the gods I am not able to say whether they exist or they do not exist,' by the decree of the Athenian council, he is exiled from the city and the country and his books are to be burnt in a public setting; from which indeed I estimate that many have been made more reluctant to profess this opinion, of course since not even doubt of the existence of the gods was able to escape punishment, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.63).

This argument of Cotta's is very strong. The Epicurean doctrine proves hypotheses by induction: all men that we have observed possess a preconception of the gods' existence, preconceptions are caused by sensations, sensations are caused by actual objects – physical or metaphysical – therefore the gods must exist. Unless there was contradictory evidence, the Epicureans thought this to be true. It is possible that Epicurus overlooked or was ignorant of Protagoras' fate and others like him. If he had known that someone truly had no faith that the gods existed, he might have let the argument of their existence go; after all, the removal of the gods existence would have advanced his theory on the anxiety their existence causes. While Cotta's argument is valid, he still agrees to grant that the gods exist in order to contest other arguments that Velleius makes on the Epicureans' behalf.

Velleius next discusses the Epicurean view of the appearance and shape of the gods. Their form is anthropomorphic by nature and by reason as Velleius explains in the following passages:

Ac de forma quidem partim natura nos admonet partim ratio docet. Nam a natura habemus omnes omnium gentium speciem nullam aliam nisi humanam deorum; quae enim forma alia occurrit umquam aut vigilantibus aut dormientibus?

(And as for form indeed nature partly suggests to us and reason partly teaches us. For from nature all men of all races hold the form of the gods as human and no other; for what other form ever presents [itself] to anyone either awake or asleep? Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.46).

Quod omnium animantium formam vincit hominis figura, deus autem animans est, ea figura profecto est quae pulcherrima est omnium. quoniamque deos beatissimos esse constat, beatus autem esse sine virtute nemo potest nec virtus sine esse specie deos confitendum.

(But if the human figure surpasses the form of all other living beings, moreover god is living, this figure is complete and is the most beautiful of all. And since it is agreed that the gods are the happiest, and no one can be happy without virtue, nor virtue can exist without reason, nor can reason exist anywhere unless in the human form, it must be admitted that gods exist in the appearance of men, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.48).

Cotta, Skeptic as he is, gives no credit to this argument and believed that to assume the gods are anthropomorphic is a slippery slope. It was simply by nature that man makes the assumption that gods resemble humans simply because similar beasts find similar beasts most attractive. Animals must then consider their form to be the most beautiful. Cotta continues to ask such rhetorical questions as, ‘Why else does a bull not try to mate with a mare, or a horse with a cow?’

An putas ullam esse terra marique beluam quae non sui generis belua maxime delectetur? quod ni ita esset, cur non gestiret taurus equae contrectatione, equus

vaccae? an tu aquilam aut leonem aut delphinum ullam anteferre censes figuram suae? quid igitur mirum, si hoc eodem modo homini natura praescrisit, ut nihil pulchrius quam hominem putaret, eam esse causam cur deos hominum similes putaremus?

(Or do you think that there is any beast on land and in the sea, which is not most pleased by a beast of its own kind? If that was not so, why doesn't a bull passionately desire contact with a mare, or a horse with a cow? Or do you think that a bird or lion or dolphin prefers any shape to its own? Therefore, is it surprising, if in this same way nature taught to man to think that nothing is more beautiful than men, that this was a reason why we should think that gods are similar to man? Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.77b).

Cotta also argues that if beasts had reason, they too would believe that gods exist in their own form: 'quid censes, si ratio esset in beluis, non suo quasque generi plurimum tributuras fuisse?' (Do you believe that if there was reason in beasts, that each of them would give the most tribute to their own race? Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.78). Further, if he were to grant that men are the most beautiful creatures in form, how can it be distinguished which man the gods most resemble? He is not sure what is to be made of those philosophers who delight in the defects of younger men. For example, a mole on the arm of a boy excites Alcaeus, or squinty-eyed Roscius excites Quintus Catulus:

naevus in articulo pueri delectat Alcaeum; at est corporis macula naevus; illi tamen hoc lumen videbatur. Q. Catulus, huius collegae et familiaris nostri pater, dilecit municipem tuum Roscius. . .huic deo pulchrior; at erat, sicuti hodie est, perversissimis oculis.

(A mole on the arm of a boy delights Alcaeus; but a mole is a blemish of the body; to him, nevertheless, this seemed a beauty. Quintus Catulus, the father of this colleague and friend of ours, prized Roscius, your fellow-townsmen. . .to him more beautiful than a god; but he was, as he is today, dreadfully squint-eyed, C. *De Natura Deorum* 1.79).

Cotta is not willing to agree that believers in god would ever consider the gods as having some sort of defect:

ecquos if non tam strabones at paetulos esse arbitramur, ecquos naevum habere, ecquos silos falccos frontones capitones, quae sunt in nobis, an omnia emendata in illis?

(Is there any one of them, if we think, that are not so cross-eyed as a slightly cross-eyed person, any that possess a mole, are pug-nosed, flabby, have a big forehead or big head, which are defects in us, or is everything in them perfect? Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.80).

Next, if not all humans look the same, then not all the gods look the same. Given this, Cotta thought it not feasible that all the gods are *most* beautiful:

num etiam una est omnium facies? Nam si plures, aliam esse alia pulchriorem necesse est, igitur aliquis non pulcherrimuss dues.

(Now also is one's aspects the aspects of them all? For if not, it is necessary for some to be more beautiful than others, therefore some god is not the most beautiful, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.80).

Cotta's arguments start with an untrue assumption: Epicureans believe gods are anthropomorphic because they are the 'most beautiful' form. This is documented in no location other than *De Natura Deorum*. It may have been true that Epicurus believed this was the most beautiful form, but his reasons that the gods existed in any form was because of 'images' received by them while awake or asleep (concept explained on page 10).

Cotta finally dismantles the step-by-step reasoning of Velleius' (that gods are happy, cannot be happy without virtue, cannot have virtue without reason, and reason only exists in the human form) when he says that the inactivity of the gods and absence of obligation to anything, man or another god, means that gods have no virtue. Cotta demands that Velleius' gods are not happy on the basis that virtue is active, and that it involves doing something on someone else's behalf:

virtus autem actiuosa; et deus vester nihil agens; expers virtutis igitur; ita ne beatus quidem.

(But virtue is active, and yet your god isn't moving at all; therefore he is without any share of virtue; and thus indeed not happy, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.110b).

Too strong a paradox exists between being inactive yet still being virtuous and beneficent. By removing this part of Velleius' logic, he cannot say that the gods exist in human form; however, this was not a facet of Epicureanism. Epicureans did not believe that virtue was a stand-alone nature of humans. The concept of virtue was rooted in pleasure and gods, according to the Epicureans, were at all times experiences the highest form of pleasure, absence of pain. Because this was 'the End of Goods', pleasure could not be increased and hence gave reason to the gods' inactivity. While step-by-step conclusions were common to the Epicureans, this particular one would not have been shared by the Epicurean school.

Velleius then offers the idea that the gods have a quasi-body, or that the gods cannot be touched and are not solid, but are created from images flowing from the minds of men. *Isonomia* is another Greek term that Cicero identifies with the Epicureans, which is the idea that all events have an equal and opposite event. The Epicureans argue that for every mortal, there is an equal number of immortals. In this same way, for all of the atoms that may decay in a god, there are an equal number of atoms replenishing their quasi-body. Cicero depicts this in chapters 49 and 50:

nec tamen ea species corpus est sed quasi corpus... non sensu sed mente cernatur, nec soliditate [die percepiuntur]... sed imaginibus species ex innumerabilibus individuis existat et a deis affluat... imagines... quae sit et beata natura et aeterna... qua intellegi necesse est eam esse naturam ut omnia omnibus paribus paria respondeant; hanc *isonomia*, appellat Epicurus id est aequabilem tributionem.

(nevertheless, their appearance is not a body, but quasi-body... not perceived in sensation but in the mind, the gods are not perceived in a solid state... but they are perceived through images in similarity and succession, and an infinite appearance of very similar images is formed from countless atoms and streamed [to] the gods... images... which are both happy and eternal in nature... which it is necessary to understand that this is nature that all things correspond equally to all equal things, this Epicurus calls *isonomia*, that is, equal distribution, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.49-50).

Naturally, Cotta cannot believe this. If the gods are made of atoms, then how are they eternal? Being made of atoms implied that the gods have an origin and so they must also perish based on the principles of *isonomia*. Lastly, he believes the idea of the quasi-bodies of the gods is a means of escape from a weak argument. Cotta's rebuttal to *isonomia* is given in chapter 68:

quicquid enim ex atomis, id natum aliquando est; si natum, nulli dei ante quam nati; et si ortus est deorum, interitus sit necesse est, ut tu paulo ante de Platonis mundo disputabas. Ubi igitur illud vestrum beatum et aeternum, quibus duobus verbis significatis deum? quod cum efficere vultis, in dumeta correptis. Ita enim dicebas, non corpus esse in deo sed quasi corpus, nec sanguinem sed tamquam sanguinem.

(By all means the gods exist from atoms, therefore they are not eternal. For whatever comes from atoms, was created at some time; if something was born, there were no gods before things born; and if the gods were born, it is necessary they fall, as you were arguing a short time back concerning Plato's world. Therefore, where is that happiness and eternity of your school, which are two words significant of god? When you wish to prove them, you crawl into a thorn bush. For you say as such, that there was no body in god but a quasi-body, nor blood but quasi-blood, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.68).

Cotta was correct: Epicurus is said to believe that all things formed by atoms perish as 'blows' cause atoms to leave the structure; however, the gods were being supplied a constant stream of atoms, much like a waterfall (Long 46-47). Unfortunately, Cotta (hence Cicero) does expose a weak argument of Epicurus'. Epicurus gave no proof for

this constant supply of atoms; however, he might have answered in either of two ways: 1. Because there are an infinite number of atoms moving through the limitless void of the universe, it is not entirely impossible that some of them are flowing towards the gods from as others leave it, 2. (He believed) all men think of the gods as immortal, and this sensation is an inarguable truth therefore.

Velleius then answers the question of how the gods pass their day. He believes that the gods only engage in the most pleasurable things conceivable, which included no work, business, or occupation, and no obligation to mankind:

ea videlicet qua nihil beatius, nihil omnibus bonis affluentius cogitari potest. nihil enim agit, nullis occupationibus est implicatus, nulla opera molitur, sua sapientia et virtute gaudet, habet exploratum fore se semper cum in maximis tum in aeternis voluptatibus.

(In a way it is clear [there is] nothing more happy, more affluent than all the good things [god] is able to conceive. For he does nothing, is involved in no occupations, builds no works, he rejoices in his own wisdom and virtue, he is sure that he will be always both in the highest and eternal pleasures, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.51).

He argues against the ideas of the Stoic gods because of their toilsome nature:

hunc deum rite beatum dixerimus, vestrum vero laboriosissimum. sive enim ipse mundus deus est, quid potest esse minus quietum quam nullo puncto temporis intermisso versari circum axem caeli admirabili celeritate? nisi quietum autem nihil beatum est. sive in ipso mundo deus inest aliquis, qui regat qui gubernet qui cursus astrorum mutationes temporum rerum vicissitudines ordinesque conservet, terras et maria contemplans hominum commoda vitasque tueatur, ne ille est implicatus molestis negotiis et operosis.

(We will that this god was happy, rightly, but yours (Balbus') in truth was the most toilsome. For if the world itself is god, what can be less restful than to revolve at an incredible speed around the axis of the world with no point of time having been interrupted? But if it is not restful, it is not happy, if some god is present in the world itself, who rules, who governs the courses of the stars and

maintains the changing of the seasons and the ordered alternations of things, surveying the lands and the sea and the well-being and lives of men, truly he is grasped by annoying and laborious business, Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.52).

But Cotta is still not convinced. He cannot conceive what good things the gods are enjoying. It certainly does not involve revolving continually at a ludicrous speed and controlling all things about the universe. His only guess for what it may be is pleasure, which involved some kind of sensation of the body. Cotta asks what the 'highest and eternal pleasures' were that the gods were sure that they would forever enjoy:

quorum tandem bonorum? voluptatum credo, nempe ad corpus pertinentium; nullam enim novistis nisi profectam a corpore et redeuntum ad corpus animi voluptatem.

(Of what such good things? Pleasure I suppose, you must mean the ones pertaining to the body; for you recognize no pleasure of the mind unless advanced from the body and returned to the body, (Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.111).

Cotta also alludes to the senses, further proving that without sensation gods cannot be happy:

quem cibum igitur aut quas potiones aut quas vocum aut florum varietates aut quos tactus quos odores adhibebis ad deos, ut eos perfundas voluptatibus?

(Therefore, what food, or what drinks, or what varieties of sounds, or of flowers, or what touch or smells will you apply to gods, so as to drench them in pleasures? Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.112).

A jestful but strong point is made when Cotta urges his audience to picture a god that just sat around for eternity thinking to himself how happy he was:

comprehende igitur animo et propone ante oculos deum nihil aliud in omni aeternitate nisi 'mihi pulchre est' et 'ego beatus sum' cogitantem.

(Therefore picture in your mind and place forth before you eyes a god thinking nothing else in all eternity except 'it goes well for me' and 'I am happy', Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.114).

Similar to *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, the critic of Epicureanism ignores the Epicurean definition of the highest pleasure: absence of pain. The gods are supremely happy because they are free from pain at all times according to Epicurus. What purpose, then, would they have of seeking the worldly pleasures that Cotta suggests?

Velleius makes four main points about the gods: 1. Gods exist because of *prolepsis*; 2. The shape of the gods is human; 3. From a flow of atoms and the idea of *isonomia*, gods have a quasi-body that is happy and eternal; 4. Gods only engage in the happiest things conceivable, have no occupation or obligation towards mankind, and they are inactive. Cotta, as a Skeptic, presents valid arguments for why these Epicurean doctrines are wrong, but to do so he often presents false claims made by the Epicureans. The book ends with Cotta explaining that the fallacious Epicurean arguments destroy the gods entirely. He is not a father to a school of philosophy, but an architect for religion's demise. If the gods are inactive and they do no good for men who pray to them, there is no incentive for religion or piety to exist. Epicurus paid no piety to the gods and would have just as quickly denounced their existence if he did not believe that every man had some notion (*prolepsis*) of the gods. Although Cicero claims to be just a listener to the conversation between Velleius and Cotta, his beliefs align most closely with Cotta's.

Concluding Discussion of Cicero's Accuracy of Epicureanism

In a state seeking answers to life's questions, Cicero sets out to deliver a variety of schools' opinions so that Romans might have a better understanding on how to live their lives. Noble as he is for undertaking this task, his bias proves to be very destructive to that cause. As an Academic and Skeptic, he is inclined to rebut all theories that make a claim to any truth, particularly regarding the gods. How is such a style productive to delivering full understanding of the various philosophies?

It is clear from just two of his philosophical works, Cicero does not take particular favor with the Epicureans. While he promotes their actions regarding friendship and philanthropy, he unjustly criticizes their doctrines, even those regarding the aforementioned actions. He often takes ideals out of context, ignoring the body of interconnected doctrines they belong to; even more disturbing are assumptions about the philosophy that Cicero makes that are in clear violation of that very philosophy. What is less clear, are Cicero's motives for the way in which he delivered the Epicurean doctrines to the Roman people.

Cicero is a politician at heart. A former consul, lawyer, and orator, he thrives on a unified Roman state. He wants badly to revive 'main stream Greek political thought' in order to form a republic built on the foundations of 'good faith', 'virtue', and 'perfect justice' towards one's fellow countrymen (Smethurst 111). In order to accomplish this, the Roman citizens' moral compasses need to be pointed in that direction, or so Cicero believes. He possesses the oratory prowess to deliver philosophy in a way that he hopes would coach the citizen community to follow his lead. As any fair dissertation would go,

Cicero's includes obvious antagonists to his own philosophy; however, Cicero does not portray these fairly. In addition to the previously mentioned inequitable portrayals, his books on Epicureanism are often filled with petty arguments over definition and plagued with polemic discourse. For his cause, this is for good reason. If he can prove a philosophy to be nonsensical and unreasonable in the eyes of his fellow citizens, he can prove why everyone should follow the philosophy to which he is subscribed.

Epicureanism is potentially anti-social and encourages its followers to act in the interests of the individual and not the community, the opposite of what Cicero wishes (Smethurst 113). Cicero even fears that with the Epicurean release of fear of the gods, death and pain, it might promote anarchy (Cic. *Fin.* ii. 57). This is not fair; the purpose of relinquishing those fears was to promote happiness and not crime. Scholars like Elizabeth Rawson think that Cicero believes a dialectic approach is simply the most effective way to present a theory (Rawson 139), a back-and-forth battle of wits would then only be natural. He also finds some theories 'untechnical and hard to understand', but even Rawson, who identifies no ulterior motives for Cicero, admits 'one can never be sure that Cicero is being quite as fair as he claims to be where the school is concerned' and that he treats the Epicurean approach to *dialectica* unfairly (Rawson 284; 139). I believe his perversion of the Epicurean doctrine is an attempt to put down a philosophy that directly combats his own.

Epicurus takes a step-by-step approach to reaching his conclusions on ethics, beginning first with theories on physics and metaphysics. One might argue that his strongest arguments are those regarding ethics, and today his theories on physics and metaphysics can be seen as pure nonsense. Cicero sees this weakness and seeks to

exploit it in order to destroy the 'logical' system that led to Epicurean ethics. Cicero claims his reasons for writing about philosophy are unbiased, almost a gift to the Roman people, and even because he is retired from the life of politics (Cic. *nat. deor.* 1.7; Cic. *Fin.* i. 1-12). Cicero's *De Officiis* (*On Duties*; a book written about the way to live a moral life) is published a few months before his death (Smethurst 115). It was his dream to restore Rome to a well-functioning political community, and his motives for undertaking philosophy are made clear by the chronology of his writings and his accuracy of other theories.

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Academic Vita

Nathan Adam Weiner
6 Clifton Court
Voorhees, NJ 08043
nathan.weiner@psu.edu

Education: Bachelor of Science Degree in Finance, The Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2012
Bachelor of Arts Degree in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies, The Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2012
Honors in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies
Thesis Title: Cicero's Accuracy Concerning Epicurean Physics, Metaphysics, And Ethics
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Paul B. Harvey

Related Coursework and Skills:

Independent Study examining Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* and Epicureanism (Fall 2011)
Augustan Age Literature focusing on Virgil's *Aeneid* (Fall 2011)
Silver Age Satirical Literature focusing on Juvenal's *Satires* (Fall 2010)
Augustan Age Literature focusing on Horace's *The Odes* (Spring 2010)
Proficient in Latin

Other Activities:

Goldman, Sachs & Co

New York City, NY

Investment Banking Analyst - Financial Institutions Group

June 2011 - August 2011

- Developed financial models and company valuations using methodologies such as discounted cash flow and ability-to-pay analysis as well as analyzed the effects of capital raises
- Advised on potential and strategic mergers and acquisitions and capital raises for companies in the financial industry, specifically in the banks and insurance space
- Representative transactions: Advised a European insurer on a \$3.8 billion divestiture to a Columbian insurer of their mandatory pension and wealth management business in Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Chile and Uruguay

The Penn State Investment Association – The Nittany Lion Fund, LLC

Fund Manager of the Energy Sector

January 2010 – December 2011

- Utilized discounted cash flow and public comparables to evaluate energy sector equities for fund investment and presented investment ideas to fund managers to be voted upon for approval
- Managed the holdings of the third largest sector in the fund with \$450,000 invested in equities
- Created an education itinerary for fellow fund managers and the Penn State Investment Association

Summer Director of Equity Research

May 2010 - August 2010

- Compiled, reviewed, and distributed bi-weekly performance reports and the second quarter report
- Redesigned the quarter report template and distributed to fellow managers to enter information

Independent Research for Dr. Randall Woolridge

Research Analyst

University Park, PA

May 2010 – September 2010

- Researched effects of the oil spill on certain securities, psychological standards for risk aversion, the importance of time value of money and the fundamentals of the yield curve and interest rates
- Developed a Factset/Excel file to automatically track the Nittany Lion Fund's weekly performance relative to individual sector benchmarks and a benchmark performance breakdown

Sapphire Leadership Council

Teacher's Assistant/Member

University Park, PA

August 2008 – May 2012

- Assisted the associate director of the Sapphire Leadership Council in instructing Freshmen Seminar while serving as a mentor to a class of 20 students
- Participated in professional development, philanthropic, leadership, and fundraising events

Rex Energy Corporation
Accounting/Internal Audit Intern

State College, PA
June 2009 – June 2010

- Designed an internship and training program for other students from Penn State at Rex Energy
- Tested over 50 of the company's internal compliance controls as required by the Sarbanes Oxley Act
- Gathered weekly production information and compiled it for the Friday morning executive meeting
- Recommended procedures for operations to avoid future issues which were subsequently enacted