

Episode 195 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 05

Post by "Cassius" of October 6, 2023 at 2:47 PM

Welcome to Episode 195 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics.

This week we continue our discussion of Books One and Two of Cicero's On Ends, which are largely devoted to Epicurean Philosophy. "On Ends" contains important criticisms of Epicurus that have set the tone for standard analysis of his philosophy for the last 2000 years. Going through this book gives us the opportunity to review those attacks, take them apart, and respond to them as an ancient Epicurean might have done, and much more fully than Cicero allowed Torquatus, his Epicurean spokesman, to do.

This week we continue with Book Two. Last week we made a few preliminary comments about it, and this week we will be starting it in earnest at the very end of section II, right before the beginning of section III, on page 32 of the Reid edition, as Cicero claims that Epicurus himself is unsure what pleasure is:

which is beneficial, or that which is pleasing, or that which strikes the fancy merely. Now too, if you have no objection, as you do not altogether reject definition, and practise it when you please, I should like you to define what pleasure is, for 6 our whole inquiry deals with that.' 'Pray,' said he, 'who is there that does not know what pleasure is, or requires some definition to make it plainer?' 'I should proclaim myself to be such a person,' said I, 'but that I believe myself to have a thorough notion of pleasure, and a quite stable idea and conception of it in my mind. As it is, however, I allege that Epicurus himself is in the dark about it and uncertain in his idea of it, and that the very man who often asserts that the meaning which our terms denote ought to be accurately represented, sometimes does not see what this term *pleasure* indicates, I mean what the thing is which is denoted by the term.'

III. Then he said with a smile, 'this is truly an excellent thought, that he who declares pleasure to be supreme among objects of desire, and the final and ultimate good, knows nothing of the essence and attributes of the thing itself!' 'Nay,' said I, 'either Epicurus is ignorant or else all human beings who are to be found anywhere are ignorant what pleasure is.' 'How so?' he said. 'Because all pronounce that thing to be pleasure, by the reception of which sense is excited and is 7 pervaded by a certain agreeable feeling.' 'Well then,' said he, 'is Epicurus unfamiliar with this kind of pleasure?' 'Not always,' I replied, 'for he is now and then too familiar with it, since he avers that he cannot even understand where any good

Follow along with us here: [Cicero's On Ends - Complete Reid Edition](#)

We are using the Reid edition, so check any typos or other questions against the original PDF which can be found [here](#).

As we proceed we will keep track of Cicero's arguments and outline them here:

[Cicero's Objections to Epicurean Philosophy](#)

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/57157966>