

Episode 202 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 10 - The Animality Argument

Post by “Cassius” of November 19, 2023 at 1:07 PM

As background material on one of the issues raised today, the following is a collection of material from Cicero that gives background to the "animality" objection he is raising against Epicurus. This is a handout I received many years ago, and I gather that it was written by someone not supportive of Epicurus, and I don't endorse the commentary in it. For example: "Cicero portrays the Epicurean account of pleasure as a dialectically unsatisfying and empirically problematic muddle. Cicero thinks that Epicureanism is fully committed to denying intrinsic value to everything other than painlessness, and he objects to this in two ways. *In both respects, Cicero's critique seems entirely fair and plausible.*") Saying that I don't endorse the commentary is an understatement!

But it's an excellent collection of quotes and does a good job of bringing together Cicero's argument against looking to the infants, which will help us as we do our own analysis.

I. The Animality Objection

The target	(Egoistic) Ethical Hedonism: One should act always for the sake of one's own pleasure.
The objection	Humans and nonhumans animals should not have the same ultimate end (an ultimate end is that for the sake which one should do everything one does).
	<p>T1 Cicero, <i>Fin.</i> 2.109 <i>Quare aliud aliquod, Torquate, hominis summum bonum reperiendum est, voluptatem bestiis concedamus.</i> Therefore, Torquatus, some other supreme good must be found for a human being. Let us leave pleasure to the nonhuman animals.</p>
Mere Rhetoric?	<p>1. A tradition of anthropocentric and classist dismissal of hedonism</p> <p>T2 Cicero, <i>Fin.</i> 2.111 <i>Nec tamen ullo modo summum pecudis bonum et hominis idem mihi videri potest.</i> I cannot in any way think that humans and livestock have the same supreme good.</p> <p>T3 Aristotle, EN 1.5 1095b19-20 (Cf. Heraclitus fr. 4 and 29, and Plato, <i>Rep.</i> 586a-b) οἱ μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ παντελῶς ἀνθραποδῶδεις φαίνονται βοσκημάτων βίον προαιρούμενοι... Most entirely slavish people clearly choose the life of cattle...</p> <p>2. This is, after all, Cicero</p>
Naturalizing Argument	<p>(i) An animal's goal depends upon its nature. (ii) The natures of human and nonhuman animals are very different. Therefore, the Animality Objection.</p>
Contingency Argument	<p>(i) Some human actions are intrinsically (hence, non-contingently) good and some intrinsically (hence, non-contingently) bad. (ii) Reason is required to do and recognize such actions. (iii) Humans naturally have reason and nonhuman animals lack it. Therefore, the Animality Objection.</p>
Thesis	Cicero's appeal to the animality objection is not mere rhetoric, but is grounded in the naturalizing and contingency arguments.
Possible payoff	The contingency argument might bear comparing with Kant and subsequent insistence that moral truths are necessary truths.
Strategy	Work through <i>De Finibus</i> II twice, first to reveal the grounds for Cicero's rejection of Epicurean ethics and then to reveal how he understands the distinction between human and nonhuman animals. This will show, I hope, that the Animality Objection emerges with both the naturalizing and the contingency arguments backing it.

AM

2. The Critique of Epicurean Ethics in De Finibus II

- Outline
- I. Against Epicurean account of pleasure (2.1-20)
 - II. Against Epicurean account of other things, as valuable merely for the sake of pleasure (2.20-85)
 - A. ...as valuable merely for the sake of kinetic pleasure (2.20-30)
 - B. ...as valuable merely for the sake of painlessness (2.31-85)
 - III. Against Epicurean advice for living well (2.86-108)
 - IV. Peroration. (2.109-119)

Terminology

If S does or pursues X for the sake of Y,
X might be an *instrumental* good, relative to Y as a *final* good, or
X might be a final but *conditional* good, relative to Y as an *unconditional* good.
If the value of X depends upon the value of some Y, X is an *extrinsic* good, and if not, X is an *intrinsic* good. Conditional goods and instrumental goods are extrinsic goods. Intrinsic goods are unconditional goods.
If the value of X depends on the value of Y and some token X might not achieve Y, then X is a *contingent* good, but if X is intrinsically good or if X necessarily achieves the Y on which its value depends, then X is a *non-contingent* good. A good can be conditional or even instrumental and yet a non-contingent good.

I. AGAINST EPICUREAN ACCOUNT OF PLEASURE

1. Epicurus neglects the art of dialectic and definition.
2. Epicurus waffles in his account of pleasure.
3. Epicurus' attempt to characterize painlessness as a pleasure is unpersuasive.

IIA. WRONG EVALUATIONS, ACTING FOR THE SAKE OF KINETIC PLEASURE

T4 Cicero, Fin, 2.21
[Idque si ita dicit, non esse reprehendendos luxuriosos si sapientes sint,] dicit absurde, similiter et si dicat non reprehendendos parricidas, si nec cupidi sint nec deos metuant nec mortem nec dolorem.
He speaks absurdly, just as if he were saying that parricides should not be reproached so long as they are not greedy and do not fear gods, death, or pain.

The Problem of Contingent Value: Epicureanism makes all actions and desires only contingently good or bad.

Epicurean response: The ultimate end is not kinetic pleasure, but painlessness. Kinetic pleasure is valuable only for the sake of painlessness.

Still more objections to the Epicurean account of pleasure.

IIB. WRONG EVALUATIONS, ACTING FOR THE SAKE OF PAINLESSNESS

1. Against Epicurean argument for painlessness as the ultimate end.
If infant goes for painlessness, nothing distinguishes Epicurean account from rival view that infant goes for self-preservation.
If infant goes for kinetic pleasure, as is more plausible, then its first natural desire is not for the goal of painlessness.

2. Against Epicurean evaluation of virtue (virtuous action).

The Epicurean account of why one should always do what is right (just) and shun what is wrong (unjust):

1. Painlessness requires the confidence that other people will help.
2. The confidence that others will help requires cooperating with them and gaining their trust.

si sceleris, inquit Carneades, aspidem occulte latere uspiam et velle aliquem imprudentem super eam adsidere cuius mors tibi emolumentum futura sit, improbe feceris nisi monueris ne adsidas. Sed impunitè tamen; scisse enim te quis coarguere possit?
 If you knew, says Carneades, that an asp were lying hidden somewhere, and that someone whose death would benefit you were about to sit down on it unintentionally, you would be doing wrong if you did not warn this person not to sit down. Yet you could do so with impunity. For who could prove that you knew?

The Problem of Instrumental Value: Epicureanism makes virtue (virtuous activity) only instrumentally valuable.

- T6 Athenaeus 12.596 = Epicurus fr. 70 Usener
 κὰν τῶι περὶ τέλους δὲ πάλιν φησὶ τιμητέον τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὰς ἀρετὰς καὶ τὰ τοιοῦτότροπα, ἐὰν ἡδονὴν παρασκευάζη· ἐὰν δὲ μὴ παρασκευάζη, χαίρειν ἑατέον.
 One should esteem the honorable and the virtues and suchlike things if they provide pleasure but if they do not, one should bid them goodbye.
- T7 Diogenes Laërtius 10.138
 δία δὲ τὴν ἡδονὴν καὶ τὰς ἀρετὰς αἰρεῖσθαι, οὐ δι' αὐτάς, ὥσπερ τὴν ἰατρικὴν διὰ τὴν ὑγίειαν, καθὰ φησὶ καὶ διογένης ἐν τῇ κ' τῶν ἐπιλέκτων.
 Epicureans say "that we choose the virtues, too, on account of pleasure and not on account of themselves, as we choose medicine on account of health, as Diogenes [of Tarsus] also says, in the twentieth book of his *Epilēcta*."
- T8 Epicurus, *SY* 27, trans. LS
 ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδευμάτων μόλις τελειωθείσιν ὁ καρπὸς ἔρχεται, ἐπὶ δὲ φιλοσοφίας συντρέχει τῇ γνώσει τὸ τερπνόν· οὐ γὰρ μετὰ μάθησιν ἀπόλαυσις, ἀλλὰ ἅμα μάθησις καὶ ἀπόλαυσις.
 In other pursuits the reward comes at the end and is hard won, but in philosophy the enjoyment keeps pace with knowledge, for it is not learning followed by entertainment, but learning and entertainment at the same time.
- T9 Cicero, *Fin*, 2.69, trans. Woolf
lubebat eos qui audiebant secum ipsos cogitare pictam in tabula Voluptatem pulcherrimo vestitu et ornatu regali in solio sedentem; praesto esse Virtutes ut ancillulas, quae nihil aliud agerent, nullum suum officium ducerent nisi ut Voluptati ministrarent et eam tantum ad aurem admonerent (si modo id pictura intellegi posset) ut caveret ne quid faceret imprudens quod offenderet animos hominum, aut quicquam e quo oriretur aliquis dolor. "Nos quidem Virtutes sic natae sumus ut tibi serviremus, aliud negoti nihil habemus."
 He [viz., Cleanthes] would ask the audience to imagine a painting of Pleasure, decked out in gorgeous regal attire, sitting on a throne. By her side are the Virtues, depicted as servants who consider that their whole duty and function is to minister to Pleasure and whisper her warnings (if this can be conveyed pictorially) to take care not to do anything unwittingly which might offend public opinion, or bring her pain in any way. "We Virtues," they cry, "were born to serve you. We have no other business."

3. Epicureans make friendship valuable only for the sake of painlessness, so friendship is only contingently valuable and it is only instrumentally valuable.

- T10 Cicero, *Fin.* 2.79
Sed quid ages tandem, si utilitas ab amicitia, ut fit saepe, defecerit? Relinquesne? quae ista amicitia est? Retinebis? qui convenit? quid enim de amicitia statueris [utilitatis causa expetenda] vides.
 But what indeed will you do if expediency should depart from friendship, as often happens? Do you give up the friendship? What sort of friendship is that? Do you maintain it? How is this consistent? For you see what you established about friendship.
- T11 Epicurus(?), SV 23
πάσα φιλία δι' ἑαυτὴν ἀρετὴ [Usener: αἰρετὴ]· ἀρχὴν δὲ εἰληφεν ἀπὸ τῆς ὠφελείας.
 Every friendship is by itself a virtue [or, on Usener's emendation: is choiceworthy for its own sake], but it takes its start from benefit.

III. BAD ADVICE FOR LIVING WELL
 Epicurean hedonism is supposed to work as an instance of eudaimonism: Epicureans share Cicero's belief that one should act always for the sake of one's eudaimonia.
 But Epicurean hedonism does not so work, since it gives advice that is insufficient for achieving continuous, stable success (eudaimonia).

Summing Up Cicero portrays the Epicurean account of pleasure as a dialectically unsatisfying and empirically problematic muddle.
 Cicero thinks that Epicureanism is fully committed to denying intrinsic value to everything other than painlessness, and he objects to this in two ways.
 In both respects, Cicero's critique seems entirely fair and plausible.

3. Animality in *De Finibus* II

- Epicurean Appeal T12 Cicero, *Fin.* 1.30
omne animal, simul atque natum sit, voluptatem appetere eaque gaudere ut summo bono, dolorem aspernari ut summum malum et, quantum possit, a se repellere, idque facere nondum depravatum, ipsa natura incorrupte atque integre iudicante.
 Every animal as soon as it is born seeks pleasure and rejoices in it as the highest good, while shunning pain as the highest evil and repelling it as much as it can, and [every animal] does this when it is not yet corrupted, when nature itself judges purely and honestly.
- Reply 1 T13 Cicero, *Fin.* 2.33
Bestiarum vero nullum iudicium puto. Quamvis enim depravatae non sint, pravae tamen esse possunt. Ut bacillum aliud est inflexum et incurvatum de industria, aliud ita natum, sic ferarum natura non est illa quidem depravata mala disciplina, sed natura sua.
 In truth, I think nothing of the judgment of nonhuman animals. For although they may not have been corrupted, still they can be corrupt. Just as one stick is bent and distorted intentionally and another has grown that way, so the nature of wild animals is not that way because it is corrupted by bad training, but by its own nature.
- Reply 2 T14 Cicero, *Fin.* 2.33-34
Nec vero ut voluptatem expetat natura movet infantem, sed tantum ut se ipse diligat, ut integrum se salvumque velit. Omne enim animal, simul et ortum est, et se ipsum et omnes partes suas diligit duasque quae maximae sunt in primis amplectitur, animum et corpus, deinde utriusque partes. Nam sunt et in animo praecipua quaedam et in corpore, quae cum leviter agnovit, tum discernere incipit, ut ea quae prima data sint natura appetat asperneturque contraria. In his primis naturalibus voluptas insit necne, magna quaestio est; nihil vero putare esse praeter voluptatem, non membra, non sensus, non ingeni motum, non integritatem corporis, non valetudinem [corporis], summae mihi videtur inscitiae.
 In truth, nature moves the newborn not to seek pleasure but simply to love itself and to wish to keep itself safe and sound. For every animal, as soon as it is born, loves both itself and all its parts, and it embraces above all its two greatest things, mind and body, and

then the parts of each. For both in mind and in body there are certain preferred things which the animal has slightly recognized, and then begins to distinguish, with the result that it seeks these things that are first given by nature and it spurns their contraries. Whether pleasure is among the first natural things or not is not a difficult question. But it seems to me the height of folly to think that it consists of nothing in truth except pleasure, no limbs, no senses, no mental activity, no bodily soundness, no health.

T15 Cicero, *Fin.* 2.109-110
[Quare aliud aliquod, Torquate, hominis summum bonum reperiendum est.] voluptatem bestiis concedamus, quibus vos de summo bono testibus uti soletis. Quid si etiam bestiae multa faciunt duce sua quaeque natura, partim indulgenter vel cum labore, ut in gignendo, in educando perfacile appareat aliud quidam iis propositum, non voluptatem? Partim cursu et peragratione laetantur; congregatione aliae coetum quodam modo civitatis imitantur; videmus in quodam volucrum genere nonnulla indicia pietatis, cognitionem, memoriam, in multis etiam desideria videmus. Ergo in bestiis erunt secreta a voluptate humanarum quaedam simulacra virtutum, in ipsis hominibus virtus nisi voluptatis causa nulla erit?

Let us leave pleasure to the animals, whose testimony about the supreme good you all customarily use. But what if even nonhuman animals do many things with their nature as their guide, which make it clearly apparent that they have aim other than pleasure? Some do things with kindness, even with difficulty, in giving birth to and rearing their young. Some love to run free and roam about. Some, because they are gregarious, imitate the gathering of a civil society in a way. In a certain class of birds we see signs of loyalty, and we see recognition and memory; in many we even see grief. Will there therefore be semblances of human virtues in nonhuman animals independently of pleasure, while in humans themselves there will be no virtue that is not for the sake of pleasure?

Reply 3 =
Animality
Objection

T16 Cicero, *Fin.* 2.40
Hi non viderunt, ut ad cursum equum, ad arandum bovem, ad indagandum canem, sic hominem ad duas res, ut ait Aristoteles, ad intellegendum et <ad> agendum esse natum quasi mortalem deum, contraque ut tardam aliquam et languidam pecudem ad pastum et ad procreandi voluptatem hoc divinum animal ortum esse valuerunt, quo nihil mihi videtur absurdus.
They [viz., Aristippus and the Cyrenaics] did not see that just as a horse is born for running, an ox for ploughing, and a dog for hunting, so a human is born for two things, as Aristotle says, for thinking and for acting, as if a mortal god. They, by contrast, wanted this divine animal to be born for grazing and the pleasure of procreating, like a slow and lazy sheep. Nothing seems to me more absurd than this.

T17 Cicero, *Fin.* 2.45-47
Homines enim, etsi aliis multis, tamen hoc uno plurimum a bestiis differunt quod rationem habent a natura datam mentemque acrem et vigentem celerrimeque multa simul agitantem...
Even if humans differ from nonhuman animals in many other ways, they differ most in this one way, that they are endowed by nature with reason and with a sharp and vigorous intellect that does many things simultaneously and very swiftly...
(He proceeds to connect the reason of human beings to the virtues justice and sociability (2.45), wisdom (2.46), courage or greatness of spirit (2.46), and temperance or orderliness (2.47).)

T18 Cicero, *Fin.* 2.45 (right before T17)
Honestum igitur id intellegimus quod tale est ut detracta omni utilitate sine ullis praemiis fructibusve per se ipsum possit iure laudari. Quod quale sit non tam definitione qua sum usus intellegi potest, quamquam aliquantum potest, quam communi omnium iudicio et optimi cuiusque studiis atque factis, qui permulta ob eam unam causam faciunt quia decet, quia rectum, quia honestum est, etsi nullum consecutum emolumentum vident.
By *honestum*, therefore, I understand that which can be rightly esteemed by itself, when all utility is taken away and without any rewards or profits. What sort of thing it is can be understood not so much by the definition I have used, although that goes some ways, as by the common judgment of all and by the pursuits and actions of the best individuals,

ignorare dicit quam aut qualem esse veint qui honestate summum bonum metiantur. Si enim ad honestatem omnia referant neque in ea voluptatem dicant inesse, ait eos voce inani sonare (his enim ipsis verbis utitur) neque intellegere nec videre sub hanc vocem honestatis quae sit subicienda sententia. Ut enim consuetudo loquitur, id solum dicitur honestum quod est populari fama gloriosum. "Quod" inquit "quamquam voluptatibus quibusdam est saepe iucundius, tamen expetitur propter voluptatem."

Here, Torquatus, you have the full and complete form of *honestas*, a whole constituted out of these four virtues, which were mentioned by you, too. Your Epicurus says that he is entirely ignorant of what or what sort of thing they who gauge it to be the *summum bonum* want it to be. For if they refer everything to *honestas* and they deny that pleasure is in it, he says that they are making empty sounds (for he uses these very words) and that he can neither understand nor see what meaning can be attached to this word *honestum*. For as ordinary use has it, *honestum* means only what brings glory by popular renown. "This glory," he says, "although it is often more pleasant than certain pleasures, is nevertheless sought for the sake of pleasure."

T21 Cicero, *Fin.*, 2.46, trans. Woolf
Et quoniam eadem natura cupiditatem ingenuit homini veri videndi, quod facillime apparet cum vacui curis etiam quid in caelo fiat scire avemus, his initiis inducti omnia vera diligimus, id est fidelia simplicia constantia, tum vana falsa fallentia odimus, ut fraudem periurium malitiam iniuriam.

This same nature has also implanted in us a desire to know the truth... From the early stages of this desire we are led on to love truth in general, namely everything that is trustworthy, open and consistent; and likewise to hate what is deceptive, false and misleading, such as fraud, perjury, malice, and injustice.

T22 Cicero, *Fin.*, 2.113, trans. Woolf (Cf. Plato, *Philebus* 67b)
...nec id ex animi solum partibus, in quibus inest memoria rerum innumerabilium, in te quidem infinita, inest coniectura consequentium non multum a divinatione differens, inest moderator cupiditatis pudor, inest ad humanam societatem iustitiae fida custodia, inest in perpetendis laboribus adeundisque periculis firma et stabilis doloris mortisque contemptio...

This is shown by the mental attributes we possess: a capacious, and in your case limitless, memory; an ability to predict the outcome of events that falls little short of divination; a sense of shame that moderates our desires; a sense of justice, the faithful guardian of human society; and a disparagement of pain and death that helps us endure suffering and face danger.

T23 Cicero, *Fin.*, 2.110-111
Et homini, qui ceteris animantibus plurimum praestat, praecipui a natura nihil datum esse dicemus? Nos vero, si quidem in voluptate sunt omnia, longe multumque superamur a bestiis, quibus ipsa terra fundit ex sese pastus varios atque abundantes nihil laborantibus, nobis autem aut vix aut ne vix quidem suppetunt multo labore quaerentibus. Nec tamen ullo modo summum pecudis bonum et hominis idem mihi videri potest.

Shall we say that the human being, which far surpasses other living things, has been endowed by nature with no preferred thing? In truth, if everything is in pleasure, then we are far and away surpassed by the nonhuman animals, for whom the earth itself pours out various and abundant provisions, with no work on their part, whereas we are able to supply our wants scarcely or not at all, and with great difficulty. However, I cannot in any way think that humans and livestock have the same supreme good.

T24 Cicero, *Fin.*, 2.113
Ad altiora quaedam et magnificentiora, mihi crede, Torquate, nati sumus...