

Episode 205 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 13 - Addressing Cicero's Contentions On The Nature of Morailty

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Welcome to Episode 205 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 Book Two of Cicero's On Ends, which is largely devoted Cicero's attack on Epicurean Philosophy. 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.

Follow along with us here: [Cicero's On Ends - Complete Reid Edition](#). Check any typos or other questions against the original PDF which can be found [here](#).

This week we move on to the middle of Section XIV, starting roughly here:

Cicero says: ... Well, by what is moral we understand something of such a nature that, even if absolutely deprived of utility, it may with justice be eulogized for its own qualities, apart from all rewards or advantages. Now the nature of this object cannot be so easily understood from the definition I have adopted (though to a considerable extent it can) as from the general verdict of all mankind, and the inclinations and actions of all the best men, who do very many things for the sole reason that they are seemly, right and moral, though they see that no profit will follow. Men indeed, while differing in many other points from brutes, differ especially in this, that they possess reason as a gift of nature, and a sharp and powerful intellect, which carries on with the utmost speed many operations at the same moment, and is, if I may so speak, keen-scented, for it discerns the causes of phenomena and their results, and abstracts their common features, gets together scattered facts, and links the future with the present, and brings within its ken the entire condition of life in its future course. And this same reason has given man a yearning for his fellow men, and an agreement with them based on nature and language and intercourse, so that starting from affection for those of his own household and his own kin, he gradually takes wider range and connects himself by fellowship first with his countrymen, then with the whole human race, and, as Plato wrote to Archytas, bears in mind that he was not born for him-self alone, but for his fatherland and his kindred, so that only a

slight part of his existence remains for himself. And seeing that nature again has implanted in man a passion for gazing upon the truth, as is seen very clearly when, being free from anxieties, we long to know even what takes place in the sky; so led on by these instincts we love all forms of truth, I mean all things trustworthy, candid and consistent, while we hate things unsound, insincere and deceptive, for instance cheating, perjury, spite, injustice. Reason again brings with it a rich and splendid spirit, suited to command rather than obedience, regarding all that may happen to man as not only endurable, but even inconsiderable, a certain lofty and exalted spirit, which fears nothing, bows to none, and is ever unconquerable. And now that we have marked out these three classes of things moral, there follows a fourth endued with the same loveliness and dependent on the other three; in this is comprised the spirit of orderliness and self-control. When the analogies of this spirit have been recognized in the beauty and grandeur of outward shapes, a man advances to the display of moral beauty in his words and deeds. For in consequence of the three classes of meritorious qualities which I mentioned before, he shrinks from reckless conduct, and does not venture to inflict injury by either a petulant word or action, and dreads to do or utter anything which seems unworthy of a man.

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