

Article: "Epicurean Philosophy in Cicero's De Republica - Serious Threat or Convenient Foil?" (Walter Englert)

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[This article](#) looks to contain good material not only on the topic but also on Cicero's general relationship with Epicurean philosophy.

Epicurean Philosophy in Cicero's De Republica: Serious Threat or Convenient Foil?

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Cicero's treatment of Epicurean philosophy in his *De republica*, and argues against those who think that Cicero's criticisms of Epicureanism in the work are neither serious nor significant. Cicero engages the Epicureans at the beginning, middle, and end of the *De republica*. In the prologue to Book 1 he argues against the Epicurean view that one should not take part in politics unless required to, showing why it is a misguided and mistaken view; in Book 3 he represents the character Philus praising the Epicurean view that justice should be sought solely on the basis of self-interest as the least objectionable account of those who defend justice; and in Book 6 Scipio ends his account of his dream by almost humorously critiquing the Epicurean view of the soul and the afterlife by showing the souls of Epicureans surviving death and suffering punishment for their errors. The paper ends by suggesting that Cicero presents Epicurean political thought as a serious problem in the *De republica* for three different reasons: literary, philosophical, and personal.

KEYWORDS

Cicero, *De republica*, Epicureanism, dream of Scipio

Cicero's acquaintance with Epicureanism was broad and deep. His earliest encounter with philosophy was with his Epicurean teacher Phaedrus, and his closest friend throughout his life, Atticus, was an Epicurean¹. Despite this early introduction to the Garden, Cicero had a negative view of many aspects

¹ Cicero describes his early study of Epicureanism at *Ad Familiares* 13.1.2. The possible effects on Cicero of his early study of Epicureanism are well explored by S. Maso, *Capire e*