

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

Post by "Cassius" of November 18, 2023 at 5:16 AM

Welcome to Episode 202 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 are largely devoted Cicero's attack on 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.

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 continue in Section X, moving past the first passage to the next main thought:

X

What no one ever called pleasure, he calls so; he rolls two things into one. This active form of pleasure (for thus he describes these sweet and sugared pleasures, so to call them) he sometimes so refines away, that you think Manius Curius is the speaker, while he sometimes so extols it, that he declares himself to be without even an idea of what good is over and above this. When we get to this kind of language, it should be put down, not by some philosopher, but by the censor, for its fault is not a matter of; language only but of morality as well. He finds nothing to blame in sybaritism, if only it be free from unbounded passion and fear.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/57762928>

Post by "Cassius" of November 19, 2023 at 12:39 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3505-episode-202-cicero-s-on-ends-book-two-part-10-the-animality-argument/>

Today's episode contains some very challenging material, but the final result should be worthwhile. We're covering a section where Cicero lays out various options on what the goal of life could be (1 - pleasure, 2- virtue, 3 - absence of pain) and how those options might be chosen singly or combined with one or more of the others. Cicero also brings up Epicurus' argument that we should look to young living things for help in making this decision, and whether pleasure is a "primary natural endowment." Once we release the episode we'll see the need to bring more clarity to some of these issues, and we'll want to discuss here in the thread what we think Cicero really means. We'll be appreciative of your comments - I will get this edited and posted over the next several days and we'll have lots to talk about.

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 ἀνθραποδώδεις 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 scieris, inquit Carneades, aspidem occulte latere uspiam et velle aliquem imprudentem super eam adsidere culus mors tibi emolumentum futura sit, improbe feceris nisi monueris ne adsidat. Sed impunita 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
 κἀν τῶι περὶ τέλους δὲ πάλιν φησὶ τιμητέον τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὰς ἀρετὰς καὶ τὰ τοιοῦτότροπα, ἐὰν ἡδονὴν παρασκευάζη· ἐὰν δὲ μὴ παρασκευάζη, χαίρειν ἐατέον.
 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
 διὰ δὲ τὴν ἡδονὴν καὶ τὰς ἀρετὰς αἰρεῖσθαι, οὐ δι' αὐτάς, ὡσπερ τὴν ἰατρικὴν διὰ τὴν ὑγίειαν, καθὰ φησι 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 *Epilecta*."
- T8 Epicurus, *SV* 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 absurdius.
 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,

virtutibus, quae a te quoque commemoratae sunt, continentur. Plurimae se laus Epicurus omnino ignorare dicit quam aut qualem esse velint 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 animalibus 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...

Post by “Cassius” of November 19, 2023 at 1:14 PM

Yikes.

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.

I don't think that's the Epicurean response at all! But presuming that this comment reflect's the writer's opinion (I am unclear about that) I do think this illustrates the dangers of the modern anti-Epicurean / pro Cicero position very well! 😊

Post by “Don” of November 19, 2023 at 1:22 PM

Where are they getting that "Epicurean response"? That doesn't look textual, merely commentary from the author's perspective.

Post by “Cassius” of November 19, 2023 at 3:06 PM

Yes, that's exactly my read and reaction too Don. The writer of the handout was taking the position that the Epicurean response to attacks on "pleasure" was to redefine pleasure as painlessness/tranquility/ataraxia. That's the prevailing view, which we have seen many places, that the only purpose of kinetic pleasure is to achieve katastematic pleasure, *because of course it is, because painlessness can't mean ordinary pleasure, can it? That would fly in the face of our stoic-friendly view of Epicurus that all we want in life is tranquility!*

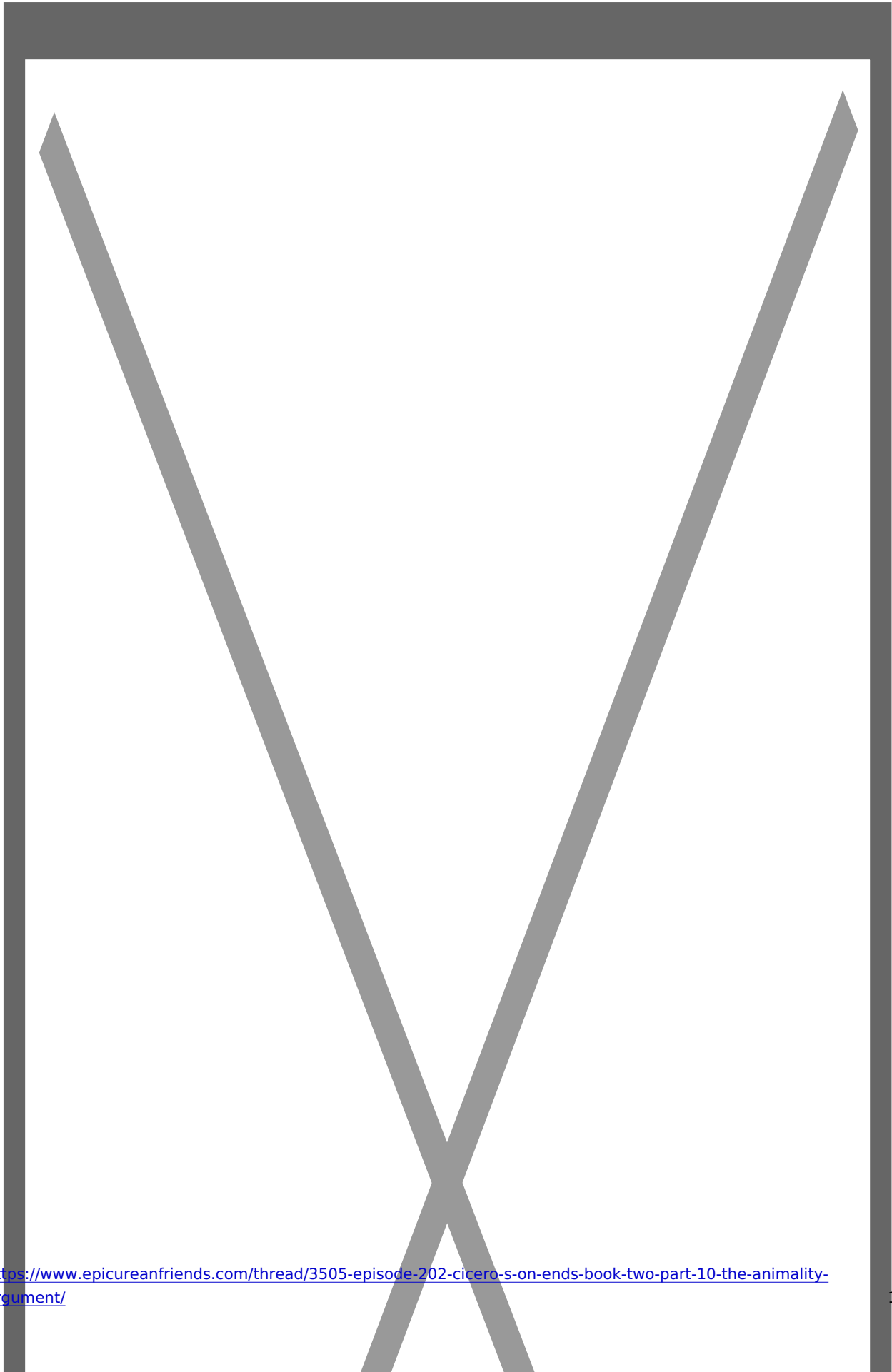
Post by “Cassius” of November 21, 2023 at 6:26 AM

Something else that will play into this episode is that Cicero introduces **Carneades** as having a significant position on the relationship of pleasure and virtue.

Carneades' name has been mentioned here on the forum superficially for a long time, because Boris [Nikolsky](#) argues that Carneades' division of types of pleasure likely influenced Cicero's argument. We don't get into it too far here, but Cicero mentions that Carneades opposed the Stoics. Here Cicero seems to say that Carneades argued in favor of a dual good of both pleasure and virtue, but when you read the Wikipedia article and see how much of a skeptic Carneades was, it seems unlikely that he ultimately took a position on anything. If we can presume that Cicero was taking cues from Carneades, and it seems so after comparing this Wikipedia article to what Cicero says his own position is, then this is additional reason to go back and pick up [Nikolsky](#)'s commentary on exactly what Cicero might have picked up.

For the moment I will just cite the Wikipedia article but if anyone has any insight into Carneades that might be helpful for us unwinding some of the material in this episode.

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3505-episode-202-cicero-s-on-ends-book-two-part-10-the-animality-argument/>

[Carneades - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

Carneades ([/kɑːrˈniːədiːz/](#); [Greek](#): Καρνεάδης, Karneadēs, "of [Carnea](#)"; 214/3–129/8 BC^[2]) was a [Greek](#) philosopher,^[3] perhaps the most prominent head of the [Skeptical Academy](#) in ancient Greece.^[3] He was born in [Cyrene](#).^[4] By the year 159 BC,^[citation needed] he had begun to attack many previous [dogmatic](#) doctrines, especially [Stoicism](#) and even the [Epicureans](#),^[5] whom previous skeptics had spared.^[citation needed]

As [scholarch](#) (leader) of the [Academy](#), he was one of three philosophers sent to [Rome](#) in 155 BC where his lectures on the uncertainty of [justice](#) caused consternation among leading politicians.^{[6][7][8]} He left no writings.^[9] Many of his opinions are known only via his successor [Clitomachus](#).^[10] He seems to have doubted the ability not just of the [senses](#) but of [reason](#) too in acquiring [truth](#). His skepticism was, however, moderated by the belief that we can, nevertheless, ascertain probabilities (not in the sense of statistical probability, but in the sense of persuasiveness)^[11] of truth, to enable us to act.^[12]

Carneades, the son of Epicomus or Philokomus, was born at [Cyrene](#), [North Africa](#) in 214/213 BC. He migrated early to [Athens](#). There he attended the lectures of the [Stoics](#), learning their logic from [Diogenes of Babylon](#) and studying the works of [Chrysippus](#). He subsequently focused his efforts on refuting the Stoics, attaching himself to the [Platonic Academy](#), which had suffered from the attacks of the Stoics. On the death of [Hegesinus of Pergamon](#), he was chosen [scholarch](#) (head) of the Academy. His great eloquence and skill in argument revived the glories of the Academic Skeptics. He asserted nothing (not even that nothing can be asserted), and carried on a vigorous argument against every [dogma](#) maintained by other sects.

In the year 155 BC, when he was fifty-eight years old, he was chosen with the Stoic [Diogenes of Babylon](#) and the [Peripatetic Critolaus](#) to go as ambassadors to [Rome](#) to deprecate the fine of 500 talents which had been imposed on the Athenians for the destruction of [Oropus](#). During his stay at Rome, he attracted great notice from his eloquent speeches on philosophical subjects. It was here that, in the presence of [Cato the Elder](#), he delivered his several orations on [justice](#). The first oration was in commendation of the [virtue](#) of [Roman justice](#). The next day he delivered the second oration, in which he refuted all the arguments he had made the day before. He persuasively attempted to prove that justice was inevitably problematic, and not a given when it came to virtue, but merely a compact device deemed necessary for the maintenance of a well-ordered society. This oration shocked Cato. Recognizing the potential danger of Carneades' arguments, Cato moved the [Roman Senate](#) to send Carneades back to Athens to prevent Roman youth from being exposed to a re-examining of Roman doctrines. Carneades lived twenty-seven years after this at [Athens](#).

Carneades is known as an [Academic Skeptic](#). Academic Skeptics (so called because this was the type of skepticism taught in [Plato's Academy](#) in [Athens](#)) hold that [all knowledge is impossible](#), except for the knowledge that all other knowledge is impossible.

Carneades left no writings, and all that is known of his lectures is derived from his intimate friend and pupil, [Clitomachus](#); but so true was he to his own principles of withholding assent, that Clitomachus confesses he never could ascertain what his master really thought on any subject.[\[citation needed\]](#) In [ethics](#), which more particularly were the subject of his long and laborious study, he seems to have denied the conformity of the moral ideas with nature. This he particularly insisted on in the second oration on [Justice](#), in which he manifestly wished to convey his own notions on the subject; and he there maintains that ideas of justice are not derived from nature, but that they are purely artificial for purposes of expediency.[\[citation needed\]](#)

All this, however, was nothing but the special application of his general theory, that people did not possess, and never could possess, any criterion of [truth](#).

Carneades argued that, if there were a criterion, it must exist either in [reason](#) (logos), or [sensation](#) (aisthêsis), or [conception](#) ([phantasia](#)). But then reason itself depends on conception, and this again on sensation; and we have no means of judging whether our sensations are true or false, whether they correspond to the objects that produce them, or carry wrong impressions to the mind, producing false conceptions and ideas, and leading reason also into error. Therefore, sensation, conception, and reason, are alike disqualified for being the criterion of truth.[\[citation needed\]](#)

But after all, people must live and act, and must have some rule of [practical life](#); therefore, although it is impossible to pronounce anything as absolutely true, we may yet establish probabilities of various degrees. For, although we cannot say that any given conception or sensation is in itself true, yet some sensations appear to us more true than others, and we must be guided by that which seems the most true. Again, sensations are not single, but generally combined with others, which either confirm or contradict them; and the greater this combination the greater is the probability of that being true which the rest combine to confirm; and the case in which the greatest number of conceptions, each in themselves apparently most true, should combine to affirm that which also in itself appears most true, would present to Carneades the highest probability, and his nearest approach to truth.[\[17\]](#)

Post by “Don” of November 21, 2023 at 7:03 AM

Here's Diogenes Laertius on Carneades

[Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, BOOK IV, Chapter 9. CARNEADES \(c. 213-129 B.C.\)](#)

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of November 21, 2023 at 1:40 PM

Can't wait to get to the arguments for friendship, my translation says the Wiseman should love friends as himself (paraphrasing) interesting to hear the discussion.

Post by “Don” of November 21, 2023 at 2:03 PM

In case you're interested:

[Epicurean Sage](#)

My goal in this translation of Diogenes Laertius's Lives of Eminent Philosophers, Book X.117-121, was to be as literal as possible to preserve the flavor of...
sites.google.com

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of November 21, 2023 at 2:21 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

In case you're interested:

<https://sites.google.com/view/epicureansage>

Thanks for sharing this Don, it's your own blog?

Interesting on the sexual relationships

Quote

epicureans generally think that the sage will never succumb to lustful desire or be overwhelmed by sexual passions

Is this to say that they will not give into an urge but will carefully use their practical reason to weigh whether having sex will amount to more pleasure or pain? (obvious mention the act itself will be pleasurable) or is it saying the Epicurean Sage will forgo sex all together?

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3505-episode-202-cicero-s-on-ends-book-two-part-10-the-animality-argument/>

Post by “Don” of November 21, 2023 at 2:26 PM

I interpret the saying as:

[Quote from Eoghan Gardiner](#)

they will not give into an urge but will carefully use their practical reason to weigh whether having sex will amount to more pleasure or pain?

Yep. That's all my own stuff.

Post by “Cassius” of November 21, 2023 at 3:47 PM

[Quote from Eoghan Gardiner](#)

Can't wait to get to the arguments for friendship, my translation says the Wiseman should love friends as himself (paraphrasing) interesting to hear the discussion.

Eoghan I wonder if you are referring to the Torquatus section in Book 1 where we got into the main discussion of friendship.

If so, that was perhaps Episode 109?

Thread

[Episode One Hundred Nine - The Epicurean View of Friendship](#)

Welcome to Episode One Hundred Nine 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.

I am your host Cassius, and together with our panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the six books of Lucretius' poem, and we'll discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself,...



Cassius

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3505-episode-202-cicero-s-on-ends-book-two-part-10-the-animality-argument/>

February 11, 2022 at 7:45 PM

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of November 21, 2023 at 6:31 PM

Thanks Cassius

Post by “Cassius” of November 22, 2023 at 7:04 AM

Episode 202 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is Now Available!

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/57762928>

Post by “Cassius” of November 22, 2023 at 7:22 AM

In this episode our podcasters had apparently been away from the intermundia for too long, and so they had to express some doubt -- not about Epicurus, but about what Cicero was arguing in his animality objection.

As discussed in the episode we particularly invite comment on this one to help us unwind some of the subtlety of Cicero's objection to Epicurus' looking to the young for the best mirror of nature and therefore source for the ultimate good.

The citations in [post 3](#) above should help in untangling some of this.

Happy Thanksgiving, and let us know your thoughts!

In the end I think this unwinds quite neatly. Working through it isn't obvious on first glance, but once it begins to dawn how Epicurus is folding "every non-painful experience in life" under the umbrella of pleasure, a lot of clarity begins to dawn on the subject.

Post by “waterholic” of November 23, 2023 at 12:38 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3505-episode-202-cicero-s-on-ends-book-two-part-10-the-animality-argument/>

Thanks again for the great episode.

I know this is may be the last place to bring in mathematics, but it does help me to clear up the key confusion:

"If you remove all pain, that's pleasure."

In all his observations Epicurus is almost "mechanistic" or in this case - biological. 1. We experience the world with our senses (memories are a special case

2. Any stimulus provides us with a set of quantities of pain and pleasure: (pa, pl)

3. At any given point in time we experience a combined sum of those (sum(pa), sum(pl)).

4. Now if you remove all pain, all we are left is pleasure. And since most of stimuli provide us with non-zero amount of pleasure, there is definitely pleasure even if you are at rest, with no excessive stimulation (sex, drugs etc.)

This also explains the statement that pleasure and pain cannot be mixed. Additionally, this removes the uneasy breakdown of "types of pleasure". There are no types of pleasure, there are different activities and stimuli, each contributing "atomic units" of pleasure and pain.

And of course, having come to Epicurus through Cicero, I should be thankful to him, for his outright open hostility and not very well disguised mental gymnastics were the triggers for me. He understands quite well, but finds these thoughts too dangerous for the perfect state he dreams of.

Any references to such an understanding in sources or do I misunderstand?

Post by "Cassius" of November 23, 2023 at 5:59 AM

Waterholic I am not sure about the impact of the "all."

When the Epicureans reference removal of "all" pain don't they immediately equate that with "the height of pleasure"?

You raise the issue we are discussing: does "all" pain have to be removed before any pleasure is experienced? I presume the answer is "no."

Post by "Cassius" of November 23, 2023 at 9:52 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3505-episode-202-cicero-s-on-ends-book-two-part-10-the-animality-argument/>

Waterholic going further with your comment, are you speculating that pleasure and pain can indeed be reduced to fungible units?

I sometimes got that impression from DeWitt's "unity of pleasure" chapter but not sure he stated that explicitly.

Post by “waterholic” of November 23, 2023 at 9:55 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Waterholic I am not sure about the impact of the "all."

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You raise the issue we are discussing: does "all" pain have to be removed before any pleasure is experienced? I presume the answer is "no."

[Cassius](#) this part is also quite intuitive. I totally agree, you don't need to remove all pain to experience pleasure, in fact that is practically impossible to achieve.

But you do have a relative proportion of pain and pleasure buckets, and it is this relative proportion that defines how you feel. The height of pleasure can be understood as an asymptote: removing all pain gets you to the state where the proportion of pleasure (no matter how little) is maximum and that's as best as one can feel.

Perhaps not worth it, but for clarity, such a mathematical model could be derived (not to confuse with the perfect form of mathematics, it's just a language).

Post by “waterholic” of November 23, 2023 at 9:58 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Waterholic going further with your comment, are you speculating that pleasure and pain can indeed be reduced to fungible units?

I sometimes got that impression from DeWitt's "unity of pleasure" chapter but not sure he stated that explicitly.

[Cassius](#) i don't believe it can, at least not with our limited understanding of our biology. I rather use it as a "model" to think about how pleasure and pain have emerged as chemical instruments of evolution to guide ALL living organism (including animals).

Post by “Cassius” of November 23, 2023 at 9:58 AM

We crossposted but you see my prior comment. I *do* think exploring this in mathematical terms is helpful. If we reach a limit to its usefulness then identifying that limit will itself be useful. So please continue 😊

Post by “waterholic” of November 23, 2023 at 10:01 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We crossposted but you see my prior comment. I *do* think exploring this in mathematical terms is helpful. If we reach a limit to its usefulness then identifying that limit will itself be useful. So please continue

In that case, this could be a very entertaining weekend project: derive a simple mathematical model and visualisation of how pleasure and pain components contribute to our life from the Epicurean perspective 😊

Post by “Cassius” of November 23, 2023 at 10:13 AM

[Quote from waterholic](#)

This also explains the statement that pleasure and pain cannot be mixed. Additionally, this removes the uneasy breakdown of "types of pleasure". There are no types of

pleasure, there are different activities and stimuli, each contributing "atomic units" of pleasure and pain.

Yes I can see that would be one of the implications - a further terminology change in the meaning of "pleasure" -- especially if pleasure includes "health" and "normality" and everything that is not a pain unit.

We presumably will run into the issues that the Utilitarians did as to dolors etc, but I have not read into that well enough to comment. Probably that's relevant and needs to be included eventually. I don't even know if they considered that to be problematic themselves, or only their enemies did. I can see how "greatest good for the greatest number" fails because these units aren't transferable in measure from person to person.

But as a model of how a SINGLE person can view the issue within themselves, I've never really seen the big problem. As long as you keep firmly focused on how subjective the issue is, and how the same activity can change from pleasure to pain and back by time, place, etc. then I think the analysis is helpful.

What it REALLY needs to help with is making clear that:

1. You don't have to get rid of ALL pain in order to experience ANY pleasure
2. There's nothing "magic" that happens when you move from 99.9% to 100% -- 100% is not a different transcendent "type" of pleasure different from 99.9%. But's that's the inference that I think far too many people are drawing from "absence of pain is the height of pleasure." The correct implications need to be clearly separated from the incorrect implications.