

Episode 214 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 21 - Cicero Argues For An Ideal View of Friendship and Happiness Which Epicureans Reject

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2024 at 5:06 AM

Welcome to Episode 214 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most 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 further into Section XXV:

REID EDITION

XXV. You, Torquatus, would do all this; for there is, I think, no action meriting the highest approbation, which I believe you likely to omit through fear either of death or of pain. But the question is not what consists with your disposition, but what consists with your philosophy. The principles which you maintain, the maxims which you have been taught and accept are utterly subversive of friendship, even though Epicurus should laud it to the skies, as indeed he does. Oh, but he himself cultivated friendships. Pray, who denies that he was not only a good man, but a kindly and a gentle man? In these discussions the point at issue concerns his ability, and not his character. Let us leave such aberrations to the light-minded Greeks, who persecute with their abuse those with whom they disagree about the truth. But whatever his kindness in supporting his friends, yet if what you say of him is true (for I make no confident statements) he was deficient in penetration. But he won the assent of many. Perhaps deservedly too, but the evidence of the crowd is not of the highest importance; since in every art or pursuit, or in any kind of knowledge whatever, the highest excellence is always very scarce. And to my mind, the fact that Epicurus was himself a good man and that many Epicureans have been and many are

to-day true in their friendships and strong and serious in the conduct of their whole life, not governing their plans by pleasure but by duty,—this fact makes the power of morality seem greater and that of pleasure less. Some men indeed so live that their language is refuted by their life. And while the rest of men are supposed to be better in their words than in their deeds, these men's deeds seem to me better than their words.

XXVI. But this, I allow, is nothing to the purpose; let us look into your assertions about friendship. One of these I thought I recognized as a saying of Epicurus himself, that friendship cannot be divorced from pleasure, and deserves to be cultivated on that account, because our lives cannot be secure or free from apprehension without it, and so cannot be agreeable either. To such arguments I have made a sufficient answer. You have quoted another and more cultured maxim of the modern school, to which he himself never gave utterance, so far as I know, namely that the friend is desired with a view to advantage in the first instance, but that when familiarity has been established, then he is loved for his own sake, even if the expectation of pleasure be disregarded. Although this utterance may be criticized in many ways, I still welcome the concession they make; since it is enough for my purposes, though not for theirs. For they say that right action is sometimes possible without hope of or seeking after pleasure.

Others also, as you insisted, maintain that wise men enter into a sort of league with each other, binding them to entertain for their friends the very same feelings that they entertain for themselves; that such a league is not only possible but has often been made, and is of especial importance for the attainment of pleasures. If they have found it possible to establish this league, let them also establish another, namely to feel regard for equity, temperance, and all the virtues from pure love of them apart from interest. Or if we mean to cultivate friendships with an eye to gains and benefits and advantages, if there is to be no feeling of affection which renders friendship inherently from its own nature and its own power, through and for itself desirable, can there really be any doubt that we shall prefer our estates and our house-rents to our friends?

At this point you may quote once more what Epicurus said in most excellent language on the merits of friendship. I am not inquiring what he says, but what it is open to him to say consistently with his own system and doctrines. Friendship has ever been sought for the sake of advantage. Do you imagine then that Triarius here can bring you more advantage than the granaries at Puteoli would if they belonged to you? Bring together all the points common in your school: the protection friends afford. Enough protection is already afforded you by yourself, by the laws, by ordinary friendships; already it will not be possible to treat you with neglect, while you will find it easy to escape from unpopularity and dislike; since it is with reference to such things that Epicurus lays down his maxims. And, apart from this, with such revenues at your command for the display of generosity, you will defend and fortify yourself excellently by means of the goodwill of many, without this friendship of the Pyladean order. But for a friend to share jest and earnest, as the saying is, your secrets, all your hidden thoughts?

You may best of all keep them to yourself, next you may share them with a friend of the ordinary stamp. But allowing all these privileges to be far from odious, what are they compared with the advantages of such great wealth? You see then that if you gauge friendship by disinterested affection there is nothing more excellent, but if by profit, that the closest intimacies are less valuable than the returns from productive property. You ought to love me myself, and not my possessions, if we are to be true friends.

XXVII. But we dwell too long upon very simple matters. When we have once concluded and demonstrated that if everything is judged by the standard of pleasure, no room is left for either virtues or friendships, there is nothing besides on which we need greatly insist. And yet, lest it should be thought that any passage is left without reply, I will now also say a few words in answer to the remainder of your speech. Well then, whereas the whole importance of philosophy lies in its bearing on happiness, and it is from a desire for happiness alone that men have devoted themselves to this pursuit, and whereas some place happiness in one thing, some in another, while you place it in pleasure, and similarly on the other side all wretchedness you place in pain, let us first examine the nature of happiness as you conceive it.

Now you will grant me this, I suppose, that happiness, if only it exists at all, ought to lie entirely within the wise man's own control. For if the life of happiness may cease to be so, then it cannot be really happy. Who indeed has any faith that a thing which is perishable and fleeting will in his own case always continue solid and strong? But he who feels no confidence in the permanence of the blessings he possesses, must needs apprehend that he will some time or other be wretched, if he loses them. Now no one can be happy while in alarm about his most important possessions; no one then can possibly be happy. For happiness is usually spoken of not with reference to some period of time, but to permanence, nor do we talk of the life of happiness at all, unless that life be rounded off and complete, nor can a man be happy at one time, and wretched at another; since any man who judges that he can become wretched will never be happy. For when happiness has been once entered on, it is as durable as wisdom herself, who is the creator of the life of happiness, nor does it await the last days of life, as Herodotus writes that Solon enjoined upon Croesus. But I shall be reminded (as you said yourself) that Epicurus will not admit that continuance of time contributes anything to happiness, or that less pleasure is realized in a short period of time than if the pleasure were eternal. These statements are most inconsistent ; for while he places his supreme good in pleasure, he refuses to allow that pleasure can reach a greater height in a life of boundless extent, than in one limited and moderate in length. He who places good entirely in virtue can say that happiness is consummated by the consummation of virtue, since he denies that time brings additions to his supreme good; but when a man supposes that happiness is caused by pleasure, how are his doctrines to be reconciled, if he means to affirm that pleasure is not heightened by duration? In that case, neither is pain. Or, though all the most enduring pains are also the most wretched, does length of time not render pleasure more enviable? What reason then has Epicurus for calling a god, as he does, both happy and eternal? If you take away his eternity, Jupiter will be not a whit happier than Epicurus, since both of them are in the

enjoyment of the supreme good, which is pleasure. Oh, but our philosopher is subject to pain as well. Yes, but he sets it at nought; for he says that, if he were being roasted, he would call out how sweet this is! In what respect then is he inferior to the god, if not in respect of eternity? And what good does eternity bring but the highest form of pleasure, and that prolonged for ever? What boots it then to use high sounding language unless your language be consistent? On bodily pleasure (I will add mental, if you like, on the understanding that it also springs, as you believe, from the body) depends the life of happiness. Well, who can guarantee the wise man that this pleasure will be permanent? For the circumstances that give rise to pleasures are not within the control of the wise man, since your happiness is not dependent on wisdom herself, but on the objects which wisdom procures with a view to pleasure. Now all such objects are external to us, and what is external is in the power of chance. Thus fortune becomes lady paramount over happiness, though Epicurus says she to a small extent only crosses the path of the wise man.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/58679533>

Post by “DavidN” of February 8, 2024 at 5:31 AM

In reply to Cicero that we cultivate friendships with an eye to gains and benefits and advantages I would reply with VS39, that this is an oversimplification of a complicated subject and as stated is without merit. As he continues with can there really be any: doubt that we shall prefer our estates and our house-rents to our friends? I would reply with VS44-45 that a friend who is self sufficient is greater than property, as property managed unwisely is dependent on external circumstance, and to Cicero's final comment I'd continue with Philodemus comment on charity in his work on economics. That friendship is our insurance against fortune. In summary I would say that we do not seek friendship for its material advantage but for the pleasure it brings us, but that we should be able to count on a friend, especially a wise friend, to offer us comfort in difficult times. As Cicero himself found after the death of his daughter.

VS 39. Neither he who is always seeking material aid from his friends nor he who never considers such aid is a true friend; for one engages in petty trade, taking a favor instead of gratitude, and the other deprives himself of hope for the future.

VS 44. The wise man who has become accustomed to necessities knows better how to share with others than how to take from them, so great a treasure of self-sufficiency has he found.

VS 45. The study of nature does not create men who are fond of boasting and chattering or who

show off the culture that impresses the many, but rather men who are strong and self-sufficient, and who take pride in their own personal qualities not in those that depend on external circumstances.

“To share all their wealth freely inspired by his confidence in the adequacy of few possessions and assisted by the discourses of the sage that the Wiseman administers these goods in such a manner is a consequence the fact that he has acquired and continues to acquire friends. Their needs and pleasure figure prominently in his calculations concerning his monthly and yearly expenses, the distribution of his income and the manner in which he provides for the future.”
Philodemus

Post by “Cassius” of February 12, 2024 at 7:44 PM

In the process of editing this episode I want to call out an interesting aspect of the discussion:

Joshua makes the point that, like Justice, friendship arises through natural experience over time. We brought that up initially on the point that some Epicureans argued that friendship arises from advantages, but changes over time. However I want to pursue another aspect of the analogy, insofar as it may shed light on the question: From the Epicurean perspective, does "friendship" necessarily mean "to the death"? We need to consider not only the question as to whether every friendship should mean that we should die for that friend (most of us would probably say "of course not"). But we also need to consider the general question: "Is it ever appropriate to terminate a friendship? Under what conditions?"

[PD37](#) and [PD38](#) go on at great length to explain how, when circumstances change and mutual advantage no longer exists, justice itself no longer exists. Should we take by analogy that when mutual advantage of friendship no longer exists, that friendship also can or should terminate?

I think we tend to underestimate the implications of [PD37](#) and [PD38](#), as we find it very hard not to "deify" justice and think that justice has a life of its own and should never be terminate or violated, despite what [PD37](#) and [PD38](#) say.

Do we have the same problem with friendship? Are we seduced by Cicero's examples of Orestes and others that if we are not willing to die for a friend then we are not true friends at all?

This possibility of terminating friendship when advantage changes seems to be at the heart of Cicero's attacks on Epicurean friendship, so attractive as Cicero's romantic notions might be (as to both friendship and justice) is Epicurus telling us to be ruthlessly practical and not to consider either justice or friendship to exist when the mutual advantage is no longer there?

I think we have here a very interesting question to unwind. Our discussion in the episode should be helpful, but is by no means the last word.

Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2024 at 7:11 PM

Another note while editing:

We have previously pointed out by referencing [Philebus](#) and Seneca that the anti-Epicureans argue that pleasure cannot be the goal of life because it has no limit - it can allegedly (when viewed in non-Epicurean terms) be made better by the addition of "more."

In this section of the text, Cicero makes a related argument: pleasure cannot be the basis of happiness because a man cannot be truly happy if he is constantly concerned about *losing* his happiness. In other words, since happiness allegedly cannot be "permanent," then we need to be constantly afraid of losing it, so the Epicurean cannot be truly happy because he is constantly afraid.

I don't think we've done enough to treat that argument, and I think it jumps out at you when you think about it that this is a large part of what [PD04](#) (there are others, but especially PDO4) is all about:

[PD04](#). Pain does not last continuously in the flesh, but the acutest pain is there for a very short time, and even that which just exceeds the pleasure in the flesh does not continue for many days at once. But chronic illnesses permit a predominance of pleasure over pain in the flesh.

This observation, combined with the observation that seeing pleasure broadly as both stimulative *and* non-stimulative activities (seeing it broadly as "absence of pain") is how (as Torquatus says) the wise man is always going to have more reason for joy than for vexation.

Cicero stating the issue for us in this way is, and alleging the Epicureans are wrong in thinking that we can be confident of remaining until death in a condition of more pleasure than pain, is extremely helpful I think.

I am concerned that I am reading these sections of Cicero a little too quickly than they deserve to be read, especially at the beginning of the episode, but once you get past that into our discussion I think there is some extremely helpful material in this episode.

Post by “DavidN” of February 13, 2024 at 8:35 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3700-episode-214-cicero-s-on-ends-book-two-part-21-cicero-argues-for-an-ideal-view-of/>

One could also argue the opposite, that many people hang onto unhealthy toxic relationships when they shouldn't. That like all other aspects of Epicurean philosophy we should strike a healthy balance. It doesn't mean we abandon a friend in times of trouble, but it means that we choose carefully who we count as friends. That the mutual advantage in friendship lies in the character or virtues of each participant which greatly outweighs changing circumstances. I know I can find supporting quotes for this but I need to go make some lunch.

Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2024 at 9:05 PM

Episode 214 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. Today we take up Cicero's challenges that friendship cannot be friendship if it can be terminated for advantage, and happiness cannot be happiness if it is not completely under our control and we have the possibility of losing it.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/58679533>

Post by “Cassius” of February 14, 2024 at 9:36 PM

As we mentioned tonight in our Wednesday discussion, Diogenes Laertius says that according to Epicurus or the Epicureans:

[118] And even if the wise man be put on the rack, he is happy.

So next week as we continue to discuss these issues we will want to revisit whether we agree with Cicero's expecting that happiness for an Epicurean is something that is always under our control.

Post by “Don” of February 14, 2024 at 11:19 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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Hicks: Even on the rack the wise man is happy.

Yonge: That even if the wise man were to be put to the torture, he would still be happy.

It's important to remember that the original says εὐδαίμονα not "happy." There's a different connotation! It's not "Happy, ha ha" to my understanding. It's more content, well-being, "I did what I can do" satisfaction with life so to speak.

Trivia: στρεβλωθῆ means "stretch on the wheel or rack, to rack, torture, applied to slaves for the purpose of extracting evidence"

Hicks: When on the rack, however, he will give vent to cries and groans.

Yonge: Nor will he groan and howl when he is put to the torture.

So, will the σοφός groan or not?

The original text runs:

[118] κὰν στρεβλωθῆ δ' ὁ σοφός, εἶναι αὐτὸν εὐδαίμονα, [μόνον τε χάριν ἔξειν τὸν σοφόν, καὶ ἐπὶ φίλοις καὶ παροῦσι καὶ ἀποῦσιν ὁμοίως διὰ τε λόγου¹⁸⁴ <καὶ διὰ πράξεως>. ὅτε μέντοι στρεβλοῦται, ἔνθα καὶ μύζει καὶ οἰμώζει.

ὅτε μέντοι στρεβλοῦται, ἔνθα καὶ μύζει καὶ οἰμώζει. There doesn't appear to be a "nor" here:

ὅτε when

μέντοι indeed, however, to be sure

ἔνθα when

μύζει I. (he) murmurs with closed lips, mutters, moans.

(καὶ) οἰμώζει (and) wails aloud, laments

So, Hicks seems to have the upper hand here. This also makes sense in the light of [the sage being more affected by the emotions](#) but also "having a sense of well-being" under torture.

Post by “Bryan” of February 24, 2024 at 5:41 PM

Adding a bit to Cassius' mention of the Brazen bull, we also have Philodemus - On the Gods - Book 1 (P.Herc. 26, col. 19) “At times, both opposing elements seem to be independent origins; in one place, one element dominates and in another place, the other. They are inseparable, yet at times, they interact and intertwine, creating conflict and complexity. People see gods as responsible for all evils, creators of ongoing and future misfortunes throughout endless time, including what comes after death. If these elements were not connected, people would not fear the gods more than tyrants. They dread death as if, after life, they will be tortured in eternal retribution * by the gods, leading to both a fear of the gods as the doers of evil in the underworld, and also death as leading to fiery torment. Just as people feared Phalaris, thinking he would roast them in the bull, and [they also feared] the bull itself, as the place of the roasting -- in the same way, hearing any related word causes equal fear for both, and not less for either, even towards the source of the sound! Similarly, with the gods and death, we do not consider both a double evil, neither the direct nor the indirect threat. If we avoid extreme misery and mental harm by facing pain with a rational mind, we can overcome the worst; for with understanding, we shouldn't see death as a double or untamed evil.”

*in the Areopagus?

[ἀντι]κειμ[ένων]
[ἀ]νφοῦτέρω[ν] ἄλ[λοτε μὲ]ν ἀνυπόθ[ετον]
[ἐκατ]έραν εἶν[αι ἀ]ρχήν, ἐν ἰδίωι δ[ὲ]
[τόπ]ωι τὴν ἑτέρα[ν κ]α[ὶ] πάλιν ἐν ἰδίωι[ι] τ[ὴν]
5[ἐτ]έ[ρ]αν, καὶ ἀδιαζε[ύκ]τ[ων] ἀλλήλων οὐ[δ]ε-
[τέ]ρας ἠγεῖσθαι τῆ[ν ἑτέρα]ν, ἄλλοτε δ' ἀ[ντέ-]
χ[ειν] ἑκατέρας καὶ συν[βαίνει]ν ἀλλήλαι[σ],
[ὥστ' ἀν]τίτ[α]σιν ἔχειν [καὶ μὴ] ἄνευ π[λο-]
[κῆ]σ εἶναι. τ[οῦσ] μὲν γὰρ θεοὺς ἀνθρώπους
10[ἡγο]ῦνται καὶ α[ί]τίους ἀ[πά]ν[των] κυρίω[σ]
[κακῶν], καίωνων συμ[φορ]ῶν ὄντας τε κ[αὶ]
γενησομένους ποιητικὸς ἐν τῷ(*) [ἀπ]ει-
[ρωι] χ[ρό]νωι δηλονότι καὶ τὸν μετὰ τὴν τ[ε-]
λ[ευ]τὴν συμπεριλαμβάνοντες, ὡς εἰ [μὴ]
15ἐκ[άτε]ρον συνήπτετ', οὐκ ἂν αὐτοὺς ἐφ[ο-]
[β]οῦντο μᾶλλον τυράννων· τὸν δὲ θά-
[να]τον [φορ]ίτουσιν ὡς ἐν τῷ(*) Ἀρε[ί]ωι π[ά]γωι
μετὰ [τὸ] ζῆν ταῖς αἰ[ωνί]οις ἀμ[οι]βαῖς β[α-]
[σανι]σθησόμενοι πρὸς τῶν θεῶν, ὥστε
20[τοῦσ] μὲν θεοὺς ὡς δραστικὸς [τῶ]ν κακ[ῶν]
ε[ύλ]αβεῖσθαι τῶν [καθ' ἄ]ιδην, τὸν δὲ θάνα[τον]
[ὡς το]ῦς ἐν τούτῳ π[υρ]ω[θη]σομένους ἄξ[ον-]

[τα]. καθάπερ ἐφοβοῦντ[ο] τότε τὸ[ν μ]ὲν Φά-
[λαριν] ὡς ἐν τῷ(*) ταύρω[ι κ]ατοπτήσονται,
25[τὸ]ν δὲ ταῦρον] ὡς ἐν αὐτῷ τῆς κατοπτῆ-
[σε]ως γ[ε]ν[ησο]μένης [. κ]αὶ καθ' ὃν τ[ρό]πον
[τινὰ φθόγγ]ον ἐπα[ισθόμενοι τὴν τα-]
ραχὴν ἴσην ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρων κ[οιν]ῶς [ῶ-]
των ἔχ[ομ]εν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἦ[τ]τω κ[αὶ τ]ὴν [ἐφ' ὁ-]
30π[ρ]ο[τερου]οῦν, μείζ[ω] δ' ἐπὶ τοῦ [π]ρὸς τὸν
[φθόγγον, οὔτω] δὴ κὰν τοῖς [περὶ θεῶν]
[καὶ θανάτου] διττὸν κακὸν ο[ὐ] διδο-]
[μεν οὔτ' αὐτό ο]ὔτε τὸ παρα[σ]κευα[ζό]μ[ε]-]
[νον ἐκείνοις, ἀλλ' ἂν [τις ἐσχάτη]
35[ταλλιπωρία] τούτῳ μὴ παρῆ(*) κ[αὶ φρε-]
[νῶν βλάβη], νοῦν κἀντίπαλ' ἀ[λ]γηδ[ό]-]
νος [ἄκ]η προσβαλόντες μετανα-
στήσομ[ε]ν τὰ χεῖριστα· σὺν νῶι γὰρ οὐ
[τὸ]ν θάνατον κακὸν δι[ττὸν ἢ ἀνή-]
40μερον ἐχθρὸν χρῆ [νομίσαι.....]