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The inferential foundations of Epicurean ethics

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1 An outline of Epicurean ethics[1]

Pleasure, according to Epicurus, is the single positive value, or 'end', towards whose attainment and maximisation all human and animal life is geared. An ideal Epicurean life gains its distinctive flavour from an orchestrated set of calculations aimed at that result, balancing in particular the relative contributions of bodily and mental pleasures, and, within those categories, of two distinct types, 'kinetic' and 'katastematic' pleasures. Bodily feeling is in a way focal, since mental pleasure and pain consist ultimately in satisfaction and dissatisfaction respectively about bodily feeling. For instance, the greatest mental pain, fear, is primarily the expectation of future bodily pain (which is the main ground, and a mistaken one, for the fear of death). And the greatest mental pleasure lies in confidence that bodily pain can continue indefinitely to be avoided or overcome. But although mental feelings ultimately depend on bodily ones, and not vice versa, mental feelings are a more powerful factor in the overall quality of a life. Someone in bodily pain – which may be unavoidable – can outweigh it by the mental act of reliving past pleasures and anticipating future ones. It is this ability to range over past and future that gives mental feeling its greater power. But misused, especially when people fear everlasting torture after death, it can equally well become a greater evil than its bodily counterpart.

Katastematic pleasure is the absence of pain. The bodily version of it is called 'painlessness' (*aponia*), the mental version 'tranquillity' (*ataraxia*, literally 'non-disturbance'). Tranquillity depends above all on an understanding of the universe, which will show that contrary to the beliefs of

[1] This chapter is largely identical to one with the same title printed in G. Giannantoni and M. Gigante (edd.), *Epicureismo greco e romano* (Naples, 1996), apart from the addition of the introductory section. In this section I shall not (with one exception) quote chapter and verse. The primary sources can be found in Long and Sedley [719], §§21–5.

the ignorant it is unthreatening; and this is, strictly speaking, the sole justification for studying physics. Kinetic pleasure is the process of stimulation by which you either arrive at static pleasure, such as by drinking when thirsty, or 'vary' it, such as by drinking when not thirsty. There are mental as well as bodily kinetic pleasures, which may include the 'joy' of resolving a philosophical doubt or holding a fruitful discussion with friends. Kinetic pleasures have no incremental value: they are said not to increase pleasure beyond the painless state, but only to vary it. Nevertheless, Epicurus does apparently consider them a vital part of the good life. This is particularly because the mental pleasure which serves to outweigh present pain will inevitably consist in reliving past *kinetic* pleasures and anticipating future ones: they alone have the variety that makes this possible. So a successful Epicurean life cannot be monotonous, but must be textured by regular kinetic pleasures. In the letter written on his deathbed, Epicurus claimed that despite the intense bodily pains this was the happiest day of his life, because of all the past joys of philosophical discussion that he could relive.

At the same time, these kinetic pleasures must be carefully managed. Some desires are natural, others empty. The latter, for example thirst for honours, should not be indulged, because their satisfaction will bring either no pleasure or at all events a preponderance of pain over pleasure. Even of the natural ones, some are non-necessary. For instance, the desire for food is necessary, but the desire for luxurious food is not. In order to be maximally independent of fortune, it is important to stick primarily to the satisfaction of natural and necessary desires. But occasional indulgence in those kinetic pleasures which are natural but non-necessary has a part to play, so long as you do not become dependent on them. True to this principle, Epicurean communities lived on simple fare, and even trained themselves in asceticism, but held occasional banquets.

But how was communal living itself justified? As readers of Plato and Aristotle know well, ancient ethics does not problematise altruism as such, but does seek the moral foundations of two specific forms of altruism: justice, i.e. respecting the interests of your fellow-citizens, and friendship. Given that Epicurean hedonism is egoistic – that all your choices as an agent aim at your own pleasure – is it possible to put someone else's pleasure before your own?

Epicurus analyses justice not as an absolute value but as a contractual relation between fellow-citizens, its precise character engendered by current social circumstances. Sometimes it proves mutually advantageous to abstain from forms of behaviour which harm others, in return for a like undertaking from them. So long as such a contract proves socially advantageous, it is correctly called 'justice'. It imposes no moral obligation as such, and the ground

for respecting it is egoistic – that even if you commit an injustice with impunity, the lingering fear of being found out will disrupt your tranquillity. With regard to his own philosophical community, Epicurus attached positive value to justice and to the specific laws which enforced it, not because philosophers need any restraint from wrongdoing but because they need protection from the harm that others might inflict. 'Do not take part in politics' was a celebrated Epicurean injunction: political ambition was seen as a misguided and self-defeating quest for personal security. But the school nevertheless upheld the need for legal and political institutions, and sought to work within their framework.

Where the political life fails to deliver personal security, friendship can succeed. The very foundation of the Epicurean philosophical community was friendship. And the mutual dealings of Epicurus and his contemporaries within the school were held up as an ideal model of friendship by their successors. Unlike justice, friendship is held to have intrinsic value – meaning not that it is valuable independently of pleasure, but that it is intrinsically pleasant, not merely instrumentally pleasant like justice. Moreover, the pleasure lies in altruistic acts of friendship, not merely in the benefits received by way of reciprocation.

Later Epicureans were pressed by their critics for a more precise reconciliation of friendship with egoism, and developed the position as follows.[2] According to one group, it is indeed for our own pleasure that we form friendships, and it is as a means to this, not ultimately for our friends' sake, that we share their pleasure and place it on a par with our own. A second group veered away from egoism: although friendship starts out as described by the first group, the outcome is something irreducibly altruistic, whereby we come to desire our friends' pleasure purely for their own sakes. A third group sought to rehabilitate egoism: the second group is right, but with the addition that friendship is a symmetrical contract, analogous to justice: *each* friend is committed to loving the other for the other's own sake. This third version can claim to be the most successful in harmonising Epicureanism's two defining ethical concerns: egoistic hedonism, and the cult of friendship.

That, viewed panoramically, is Epicurean ethics, a practical and theoretical approach to human life and conduct which won itself innumerable adherents over many centuries. But in the tradition founded by Plato and Aristotle ethical systems were not simply unveiled as pre-constructed wholes: they were dialectically worked out and defended. Does Epicurean ethics fall outside that tradition? Such a conclusion would be surprising, in view of the rigorous argumentation which underlies the school's work in its

[2] Cicero, *de Finibus* (*Fin.*) 1.66–70.

other main areas, physics and epistemology. In what follows, I shall seek to reconstruct the inferential framework on which Epicurean ethics was constructed.

2 The physics–ethics analogy

Thanks to the survival of Epicurus' *Letter to Herodotus*, and to Lucretius' expansion and supplementation of its arguments, it is possible to discern a clear argumentative structure in Epicurean physics, especially in its first, foundational moves.[3] My thesis will be that the foundations of Epicurean ethics had a closely analogous structure.

After stating his principles about criteria, Epicurus' physical exposé argues that whatever the universe consists of must exist for all time. The argument is scrupulously worded so as not to presuppose any answer to the next question, what it is that the universe does consist of.[4] This strictly linear development, whereby nothing must be presupposed before it has been formally established, is a guiding principle of Epicurus' entire enterprise. It is strongly present in Epicurus' own text, although unfortunately it is often neglected by Lucretius, whose more rhetorical exposition leads him to smuggle in advance references to the atomic structure of matter almost from the outset.[5] The principle carries with it a further requirement. The opening statement of what the universe consists of must confine itself to what is self-evident, i.e. underivatively known and, it is hoped, unchallengeable. What Epicurus does at this stage is to map out the universe into two items which he hopes indubitably both have independent (or *per se*) existence. These are, in fact, bodies and space. They are deliberately introduced as quite unrefined notions.[6]

[3] The main texts are Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* 38–41 and Lucretius 1.149–634. Cf. also Long and Sedley [719], §§4–8.

[4] This point is very well made by Brunschwig [920], who observes that the argument that there can be no addition to or subtraction from the sum total (*Letter to Herodotus* 39), since there is nothing outside it, carefully avoids specifying this as body or space, whereas on later occasions (see Lucretius II.303–7, III.806–18), when body and space have been introduced, the same argument is permitted to specify them.

[5] Lucretius' arguments against absolute generation and destruction (1.149–264) contain numerous advance references to the atomic structure of matter. Epicurus (*Letter to Herodotus* 38) had said that if there were absolute generation 'nothing would need a seed', referring to biological seeds. Lucretius repeats this remark (1.160), but as his arguments continue the 'seeds' required gradually take on the profile of atoms (see, for example, 167–71, 176–7, 185, 188–91, 221).

[6] There was no safe generic word for 'space' in ordinary usage, and Epicurus had to coin his own technical term 'intangible nature' (*anaphēs phusis*), whose specific guises are 'place' when occupied, 'void' when unoccupied, and 'space' (*chōra*) when bodies pass through it. At *Letter to Herodotus* 39, when first introducing space, he calls it 'place, which we name "void" and "room" and "intangible

What we shall see in the ensuing moves is a gradual sharpening up of both, so that in the end we can be certain just how it is that they jointly constitute the universe. What makes bodies and space the natural choice, I think, is that bodies are the things which have obviously *independent* existence; and, since that independence is most evident in their ability to move in space, the bits of space which they vacate as they move must exist independently of *them*.

Space at this stage, then, is simply what the bodies are in, and what they move through. The technical notion of pure void or vacuum begins to emerge with a series of arguments which almost certainly followed, although Lucretius for his own purposes takes them earlier.[7] In these arguments it is shown that such phenomena as motion and permeation depend on the existence of unoccupied portions of space. As for body, it remains for now largely unanalysed, beyond a set of arguments to show that it must exist microscopically as well as macroscopically: its underlying atomic structure cannot be demonstrated until it has been shown that body and space are the sole constituents of the universe. And the next move is to show just that. First, body and space are analysed as contradictory opposites: this is the positive proof that they are not only irreducibly distinct but also jointly exhaustive. There then follows a supplementary argument, in which all other contenders for *per se* existence – including properties, events and time – are written off as secondary attributes, parasitic on body and/or space. Only now that it is fully established can the body–space dualism be deployed to show that at the lowest level of analysis there will be not only portions of empty space uninterrupted by body but also portions of body uninterrupted by empty space – and therefore, since there is no third thing,

nature"', thus leading with the most familiar term, and equating it with the others without at this stage also differentiating their functions. For the reading of the text, and the interpretation of Epicurus' terms for space, see Sedley [1929] or Long and Sedley [1719] §5.

7 Lucretius 1.265–417. Following his disproofs of absolute generation and destruction (1.149–264), Lucretius omits Epicurus' arguments for the impossibility of subtraction from or addition to the universe, which he no doubt found far too abstruse for his purposes because of their refusal to name body and space (see note 4 above). He moves directly to the arguments for the existence of microscopic body and those for vacuum (1.265–417), the former serving the useful protreptic role of introducing to Memmius the idea of the non-evident (1.267–70). This need was no doubt more urgent in a Roman context than for Epicurus' more physically attuned readership, so it would not be surprising to find Lucretius bringing it forward in the order of exposition. And his text at the end of this section suggests that he did. He shows some awareness that he has lost the proper sequence: he announces that there are lots more arguments available for the existence of void (1.398–417), then introduces the basic bodies–space dualism as a return to where he left off ('sed nunc ut repetam coeptum pertexere dictis', 1.418).

totally uninterrupted. Being perfectly solid, these are 'atoms'. Now and only now can the detailed work of investigating the universe's underlying causal processes begin.

Can it be shown that there was a similar methodology for ethics? If we rely on the *Letter to Menoeceus*, Epicurus' sole surviving treatise on ethics, the answer will be negative. This text is an eloquent celebration of Epicurean morality. It presents the main Epicurean articles of faith non-inferentially, in the canonical sequence sanctioned by the school's 'fourfold remedy' (*tetrapharmakos*) and the first group of Epicurus' 'Key Doctrines' (*Kuriai Doxai*). It gives away nothing about their argumentative foundations. But there is a much more promising candidate: book 1 of Cicero's *de Finibus*. Using this as a guide, I believe I can show that Epicurus' ethics had an argumentative structure similar to that of his physics – so similar, in fact, that it cannot have been unconscious or accidental.[8]

Now it has to be conceded that the exposé of Epicurean ethics in *On Ends* 1 is not directly drawn from Epicurus. The spokesman Torquatus claims to be reporting Epicurus' views, but since he at least twice incorporates divergent views of different factions within the Epicurean school,[9] we can hardly suppose that Cicero is relying on an unmediated text of Epicurus. My aim here will not be to do anything like justice to Cicero's own rather elegant composition, but to see through it back to Epicurus' original text. My contention will be that the passage's structure is strong evidence of Epicurus' original methodology, even if (and this is what convinces me that it has not been imposed on the material by Cicero's immediate source)[10] that methodology is itself not often directly asserted.

I say 'not often', because Epicurus' methodology clearly is asserted in the initial move. Torquatus' opening is as follows (*Fin.* 1.29):

[8] One might try comparing Democritus' system. Scholars have had little success in establishing a close theoretical dependence of his ethics on his atomic physics, and it has been argued (esp. by Taylor [100]) that the furthest one should venture in seeking a connection between the two is in their use of analogous conceptual frameworks. Although my claims about Epicurus will have little if any detailed resemblance to this conclusion about Democritus, a similar lesson will nevertheless emerge. Epicurus' account of pleasure owes little directly to his atomism (apart from the dependence of *ataraxia* on the conclusions of physics about god and death). There is no analysis of pleasure in terms of atoms and void, and his metaphysical outlook should never have led us to expect one (as I argue in Sedley [930]). Despite this, his ethics and his physics are structurally analogous.

[9] Cicero, *Fin.* 1.31 (discussed below), 66–70. Cf. also 39 on Chrysippus' statue.

[10] When at 1.6 Cicero speaks of 'my order of writing' (nostrum scribendi ordinem'), this need not imply that he has imposed his own ordering on the material within each book. The words are adequately understood as a reference to his own ordering of the five books themselves.

> I shall start, then, in the way in which the founder of this school holds one should. I shall establish what the thing into which we are inquiring is and what it is like[11] – not because I think you don't know, but so that the disquisition can proceed methodically. Our question then is, what is the final and ultimate good, which all philosophers hold must be such that all things are to be traced back to it, while it itself is to be traced back no further? Epicurus located this in pleasure. He wants pleasure to be the chief good, pain the chief bad. And he set about teaching it in the following way.

Torquatus' explicit testimony that Epicurus taught this to be the proper way to open an ethical discourse confirms that the *Letter to Menoeceus*, which only gets to the topic of pleasure nearly half way through, cannot be held up as a specimen of ethical methodology.

3 The basic division

Epicurus' first move, then, was to place the *summum bonum* in pleasure, the *summum malum* in pain.[12] We are clearly at a point analogous to that in the physical exposition at which the whole universe is analysed as self-evidently consisting of two *per se* existents, bodies and space.[13] Here likewise Epicurus will proclaim the analysis of values into the two *per se* values of pleasure and pain as self-evident fact. There he was mapping out the extended universe, here he is drawing up the scale of value, but the procedure is the same. The two items are initially sketched in with broad brushstrokes: only later, when their status has been confirmed and clarified, will the fine detail be added. Pleasure and pain are, at this initial stage, as unrefined notions as bodies and space were at the comparable stage of the physics. Already to identify the good with specific kinds of pleasure would be fatal to the claim of self-evident truth from which Epicurus starts out, just as in the physics to proclaim from the start that the bodies are, or consist of,

[11] 'What, and of what kind, it is' ('quid et quale sit') will be a demand for an 'outline account' ('hupographē'), not a definition (cf. *Fin.* II.4–6). On this point of Epicurean method, see Asmis [757], 39–47. But it is left unclear whether the reference is to establishing (a) what is *meant* by 'the final and ultimate good', or (b) what it consists in, namely pleasure, or whether (c) *quid* refers to the first of these and *quale* to the second, or (d) whether *quid* is answered by 'pleasure' (29–36), *quale* by the analysis of pleasure-types (37 ff.). But at any rate at 37, and again at II.6, the *quid et quale* question is clearly a single one, so (a) and (b) are likelier than (c) or (d). On (a), the answer to the question would have to be located in the relative clause 'which all philosophers hold . . .', and that is stylistically odd. Thus (b) emerges as the best reading. [12] On the use of *summum bonum* here, see §6 below.

[13] I take it that the very first steps of the physical discourse, in which the laws of conservation are established, have no analogue in the ethics. In view of our world's ephemeral existence, there would be little point or plausibility in trying to show that whatever values there are now must hold good for all time.

atoms would have sabotaged any pretence of starting from incontrovertible fact.

That it is self-evident that pleasure is the chief good, pain the chief bad, is maintained by means of the celebrated Cradle Argument (1.30):

> Every animal, as soon as it is born, seeks pleasure and enjoys it as the chief good, while shunning pain as the chief bad and averting it so far as it can. And this it does before it can be perverted, with nature herself the uncorrupted and honest judge. Epicurus therefore denies that there is any need for reasoning or argument as to why pleasure should be chosen and pain avoided. He thinks that this is felt, in the way in which it is felt that fire is hot, snow white, and honey sweet. None of these needs to be proved by elaborate reasoning; it is enough to draw attention to them.

This passage has been minutely studied by Jacques Brunschwig in his seminal article, 'The Cradle Argument in Epicureanism and Stoicism'.[14] He notes that it consists of a factual statement, that all animals naturally seek pleasure and avoid pain, followed by a normative statement, that there is no need for argument to establish that pleasure *should* be chosen and pain avoided. He maintains that the normative statement cannot be an inference from the factual statement, or Epicurus would not be able simultaneously to assert that the normative statement needs no arguing. Brunschwig suggests instead that the normative statement appeals directly to the intuition of rational adult humans that pleasure is to be chosen, pain avoided; the preceding factual statement, he concludes, has just the subsidiary supporting role of showing that that intuition need not be distrusted as a corrupted one, since all animals manifest a similar intuition, even at too early a stage for them yet to have been corrupted.

I retain doubts about this analysis. Even if Brunschwig were right to assign some such supporting role to the factual statement, it would be, in Epicurean terms, an appeal to *ouk antimarturēsis*, absence of counter-evidence – that is, an appeal to *consistency* with the rest of our experience. And that in such contexts is a, if not the, regular Epicurean form of proof.

It turns out, paradoxically, that the better way to make the normative statement an unargued one is to give its introductory 'therefore' (*itaque*) its face value and to let it follow directly from the factual statement. It is the fact that all animals already pursue pleasure as the good that makes the choiceworthiness of pleasure too obvious and uncontroversial to need arguing.

[14] Brunschwig [44].

Presumably for animals to pursue pleasure as the good just *is* for them to treat it as the thing to be chosen. Nothing in the argument or its context appears to turn on any distinction between the good and the choiceworthy.[15] It is true, as Gosling and Taylor have urged,[16] that there is an apparent conflict with *Letter to Menoeceus* 129–30, where the notions of goodness and choiceworthiness come apart: 'although every pleasure is good . . . not every pleasure is choiceworthy'. But the point there is that some *individual* pleasure, while good in itself, may be the wrong thing to choose *in the circumstances*, if it actually militates against the achievement of final pleasure. In the Cradle Argument, by contrast, Epicurus is talking not about individual pleasures but about pleasure as an end, which animals' behaviour shows them to be pursuing in *all* circumstances. Hence the very same behaviour betrays their evaluation of pleasure as both unconditionally good and unconditionally choiceworthy.

Epicurus' contention can therefore be paraphrased as follows. The feeling that pleasure is the thing to pursue is manifest in the behaviour of all animals from birth; therefore, since the choiceworthiness of pleasure is as immediately self-evident to all living beings as the coldness of snow, it needs no arguing. As Torquatus goes on immediately to observe, merely to draw attention to something is not in itself to argue. And all he has done, as he sees it, is to draw our attention to our existing consensus that pleasure is the good.

Not only is this simpler reading more successful at saving Epicurus from arguing for what in the same breath he says does not need arguing, but it also fits better what I have suggested ought to be his strategy. It is to be expected that pleasure and pain should at this stage be maximally unrefined notions. The concern is to come up with an initial assignment of value which it can be claimed is universally obvious, just as at the equivalent stage of the physics the existence of bodies was said to be 'universally witnessed by perception'. The unchallengeable look of that assertion would have been lost if Epicurus had confined himself to the sense-perceptions of adult humans. Likewise we should not try to narrow down to the class of adult humans the witnesses to whom Epicurus

[15] Cf. *Fin.* II.5, where Cicero supposes that if Torquatus had defined 'good' it might have been as 'what was by nature choiceworthy' ('quod esset natura appetendum').

[16] Gosling and Taylor [53], ch. 20. They themselves interpret pleasure's goodness and its choiceworthiness as two radically different properties, misleadingly lumped together by Cicero. But that is based on their guess – an unfounded one in my opinion – that for Epicurus pleasure is awareness of one's own proper functioning, so that pleasure's goodness consists in its appropriateness to proper functioning.

appeals for the desirability of pleasure.[17] Universality, not precision, is his present concern.

Besides, Epicurus' subsequent discussion will make it quite clear that adult humans are the worst possible witnesses on this matter, since their hedonistic intuition will often be obscured by an artificially imposed value system. That *even* rational adults, deep down, agree with the primary hedonistic intuition is something which, as we shall see, he has to argue at length.

The same point about the need at this stage for absolute generality applies to another issue mischievously raised by Cicero in his reply to Torquatus. Invoking a familiar Epicurean distinction, Cicero asks whether the pleasure sought by infants is kinetic or katastematic pleasure (*Fin.* II.31–2). Cicero makes it tolerably clear[18] that Epicurus did not specify, but that his followers, when pressed, replied that it is kinetic pleasure. Cicero proceeds to use this concession as a stick with which to beat them, by observing that, since the Epicurean supreme moral goal is not kinetic but katastematic pleasure, the goal sought by infants turns out not to be the *summum bonum* after all. Now on the analysis I am offering, Epicurus' own silence on the point was not simply a ruse for avoiding the trap into which his less canny followers were later to walk. It was methodologically correct for him to preserve the absolute generality of his account, by specifying nothing at all about how individual creatures conduct their pursuit of pleasure. To have specified the goal of infants as kinetic pleasure, or as any other kind or kinds of pleasure (katastematic, bodily, short-term, etc.), would have been analogous to opening the physical analysis of the universe not by naming *bodies* and space, but by cataloguing the specific kinds of body which sense-perception attests, for example earth, air, fire and

[17] This insistence on the universality of the hedonistic intuition is, it seems to me, equally manifest in Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 128–9: 'This is why we say that pleasure is the beginning and end of the blessed life. *For it is pleasure which we recognised as our first and congenital good* (*ἀγαθὸν πρῶτον καὶ συγγενικὸν ἔγνωμεν*); it is from pleasure that we initiate every choice and avoidance; and it is to pleasure that we have recourse when we use feeling as our criterion for all good.' There is a deliberate tone of temporal universality here in the three limbs: pleasure is (1) our congenital good; (2) the aim from which we always start; and (3) that by which *post eventum* we measure our success. In this context, it seems over-cautious for Brunschwig [44] to doubt that Epicurus has the Cradle Argument at least partly in mind in the first limb, when he calls pleasure the thing which 'we recognis*ed* as our first and *congenital* good'. The past tense (*ἔγνωμεν*) contrasts significantly with the present tenses (*καταρχόμεθα, καταντῶμεν*) in the second and third limbs. Another upshot of my argument is that, contrary to Brunschwig's contention, the reports of the Cradle Argument at Sextus Empiricus *PH* III.194 and *M* XI.96 and at Diogenes Laertius X.137 are broadly correct: the argument does directly establish that pleasure is 'by nature choiceworthy' (cf. below).

[18] See the careful arguments of Brunschwig [44], 126–8.

water, or animals, plants, rocks, etc. To do so would have seriously prejudiced the ensuing enquiry, and invited the objection that atoms are not even included among the bodies which self-evidently exist. It would also have weakened the claim of an absolutely indisputable starting-point. The object at this stage is simply to get body, generically, on to the list of things that exist independently. In what forms body exists is a question which cannot even be asked until later, when we know what else is on the list. Likewise, at the opening of the ethical enquiry the aim is to get pleasure and pain, generically, on to the scale of values. The detailed structure of that scale cannot be established until it has been proved, *inter alia*, that pleasure and pain are its *sole* occupants.

4 The division defended

At 31, Torquatus goes on to outline a dispute within the Epicurean school.

> There are, however, some in our school who want to impart these points in a more subtle way, and who deny that it is enough to make feeling[19] the judge of what is good or what is bad, but hold that it can also be understood by the mind and by reason both that pleasure is *per se* to be chosen and that pain is *per se* to be avoided. So they say that this is as it were a natural conception and one rooted in our minds, that we should feel that the one is to be sought, the other shunned.
>
> Others, however (with whom I agree), hold that because numerous philosophers have a great deal to say about why pleasure should not be counted among the goods, or pain among the bads, we should not be too confident of our case. They think that on the subject of pleasure and pain we should use arguments and precise discourses, and should fight our cause with careful reasoning.

This is regularly read as indicating a split between Epicurus and two groups of his followers: he had said that the foundational premise of his hedonism needed no arguing; they replied by offering two competing reasons why it did need arguing. This seems to me a misreading. For one thing, it would be unheard of, and a breach of the elementary code of ancient school loyalty, for Epicureans to express overt disagreement with their founder.[20] For another, the interpretation fails to connect the passage with what immediately follows at 32. (The paragraph division imposed by the editors at the end of 31 has helped to disguise this important connection.) At 32, Torquatus develops the line taken by the second faction, that the hedonist premise

[19] Or 'perception'? Cicero's use of *sensus* spans both 'feeling' (*pathos*) and 'perception' (*aisthēsis*).

[20] I argue this in Sedley [64].

needs arguing in order to resist rival philosophical theories, and he does so by quoting arguments *from Epicurus himself*:

> But in order to make clear to you how the entire mistake of those who denounce pleasure and extol pain arose, I shall explain the whole matter to you, and unfold the actual words of that discoverer of the truth and, as it were, architect of the blessed life.

Clearly Torquatus, at least, presents his own faction's view as one endorsed by Epicurus himself. And that is, of course, the standard way in which these factional disputes were conducted, both parties claiming to be the authentic interpreters of the master's *ipsissima verba*.[21] We may take it, then, that Epicurus, having said in the initial stage that the hedonist premise needed no argument, did nevertheless subsequently offer these arguments for it, and that the school was split as to his justification for doing so. The first faction said that it was in order to unpack and clarify our intuitive conception of pleasure as the thing to pursue. The second, supported by Torquatus, said that it was in order to resist those moral philosophers who had set out to subvert the intuition and to replace pleasure with some other primary value. Which (if either) party is right? We must look at the arguments.

They can be summarised as follows (32–3). All those painful actions which appear to us to be properly chosen prove on inspection to be so only for the sake of the greater ensuing pleasure. And pleasant actions are irreproachable if they do not lead to pain; to opt for pleasures, or the avoidance of pain, is reprehensible only in those cases in which the immediate attraction blinds us to the longer-term painful consequences of our choice. Therefore in absolute terms pleasure is always the proper aim, and pain is only preferable instrumentally, for the sake of pleasure.

This line of argument is familiar enough to us through a hedonist tradition stemming from Plato's *Protagoras*. Consequently it can easily be accommodated to the first faction's interpretation. Like Socrates at *Protagoras* 353–4, Epicurus can be seen clarifying ordinary people's intuitions about pleasure, in order to show that, *whether or not they realise it*, their principles of conduct are hedonistic. They may deny that they always pursue pleasure, but when they re-examine their motivations for painful choices, for example for accepting surgery or for avoiding self-indulgence, they will appreciate that they do in fact treat pleasure as the only good.

On the other hand, the passage can equally comfortably be accommodated to the second faction's interpretation. Epicurus may be arguing that

[21] Sedley [64], esp. pp. 105–17.

the kinds of values which anti-hedonist *philosophers* stress, such as temperance, are at root pleasure-driven. Torquatus, as a supporter of this second faction, does in fact use Epicurus' argument for that end, but that is not until rather later (36), at the conclusion of his ensuing moral diatribe about his own family's history (34–6) – which shows that it represents his own input, not Epicurus'. What he does there is to invoke Epicurus' hedonistic analysis as quite adequate to account for the motivation of heroic acts, and to use this explicitly as a reply to the Academics for citing heroic exempla in dialectical defence of virtue–ethics.

Which faction is right? My hunch is that both are half-right, but that both are being too exclusive. The point can be made by comparing the analogous section of the physical exposé. Having set up the primary body–space dichotomy as empirically self-evident, Epicurus, to judge from Lucretius' fuller presentation (1.265–427).[22] went on to offer a variety of arguments which defended this dualistic ontology downwards below the threshold of direct experience. First he demonstrated the existence of microscopic as well as macroscopic body, arguing that it was required in order to make sense of the powers of wind, odour, etc. Then he extended his notion of space in the same downwards direction, arguing that there must be hidden pockets of *empty* space – pure vacuum. Some of these arguments read as if they corresponded to the first faction's interpretation of the arguments for hedonism, and are aimed quite generally at *anyone* who tries to leave microscopic body and void off the world map: for example the argument that the similarity of wind's behaviour to that of water shows it too to consist of bodies, and the argument that the phenomena of relative weight and the permeation of rocks by water cannot be envisaged without the supposition of void gaps. In effect, we are being assured that microscopic body and void are already implicitly built into our world-view, whether or not we yet realise it. Other arguments correspond more closely to the thesis of the second faction, especially the argument which seeks to confute those philosophers who explain motion as the redistribution of matter within a plenum, like a fish swimming through water (Lucretius 1.370–83). Another in this category is his description of an experiment for the artificial creation of a momentary void (Lucretius 1.385–97), which we may take to be a confutation of those thinkers (Eleatics and others) who maintained that void is a conceptually incoherent notion. In these Epicurus no doubt saw himself as resisting any philosophers who sought to overrule people's correct intuitions about space. But the two kinds of argument are presented side by side, and are hard to disentangle.

[22] See n. 7 above for the likely position of these arguments in Epicurus' original discourse.

Rather than go all the way with either faction, it is better to say the following. Both in the physics and in the ethics, the first substantive stage consists of the crude mapping out of the territory, sticking to what is empirically or intuitively obvious to the untutored mind. The second stage, which we have now reached, is to amplify that first sketch by a closer conceptual analysis, showing how it accords with our other experiences and intuitions, and, as part of this project, forestalling any doctrinally motivated attempts, actual or imaginary, to turn those experiences and intuitions against it.

5 The division's exhaustiveness

We now come to the third and most controversial stage of the ethical exposition (37–8). The removal of pain is itself already a pleasure. Therefore the transition from pain to pleasure does not involve passing through some intermediate state. Therefore there are just the two states, pleasure and pain, each being identical with the absence of the other.

In seeking to make sense of this doctrine, the obvious strategy is to investigate its relation to Epicurus' general ethical outlook. As a matter of fact, that is how Torquatus himself introduces it, first describing the Epicurean ideal of ascetic pleasure, then saying that this is the reason why Epicurus denied an intermediate state between pain and pleasure. It is hard to know how far the first of these parts reflects Epicurus' own original exposition at the corresponding point. On my account of his general methodology, he might have been expected not to have presupposed the character of the ideal Epicurean life at so early a stage, but, as we shall see later, it remains quite likely that he did. At all events, we need to consider the two parts together (37–8):

> I shall now explain what pleasure itself is and what it is like, in order to dispel all the incomprehension of the ignorant, so that it may be understood how serious, restrained and sober is that doctrine which is considered self-indulgent, luxurious and soft. For we [Epicureans] do not pursue only that pleasure which moves our very nature with a kind of smoothness and which the senses perceive in a rather agreeable way [i.e. kinetic pleasure], but we hold that to be the greatest pleasure which is perceived once all pain has been removed [i.e. katastematic pleasure]. For since, when our pain is removed, we rejoice in the actual freedom from and absence of all pain, and since everything we rejoice in is a pleasure, just as everything we are upset by is a pain, the removal of all pain is rightly called pleasure. For just as, when hunger and thirst are dispelled by food and drink, the very elimination of the discomfort brings pleasure as its result, so too in everything the removal of pain generates pleasure in its wake.
>
> For this reason Epicurus did not believe that there was anything intermediate between pain and pleasure. For the very thing which some people

> considered intermediate, when all pain is lacking, he considered to be not just pleasure, but even the highest pleasure. For whoever feels how he has been affected must be in a state either of pleasure or of pain. But Epicurus thinks that the highest pleasure finds its limit in the absence of all pain, so that thereafter it can be varied and differentiated, but not increased and expanded.

What is the connection being described here between Epicurean asceticism and the denial of the neutral state? Dodging a number of interpretative controversies, I shall sketch the following brief answer. Both doctrines emerged against a background of protracted debate on the nature and value of pleasure, above all in Plato and Aristotle, as expertly traced by Gosling and Taylor in their book *The Greeks on Pleasure*.[23] But principally it was seen, and can still be seen, as a response to Epicurus' contemporaries the Cyrenaics.

In Cyrenaic hedonism, pleasures are smooth *kinēseis* (movements or processes of change) – the temporary states of stimulation or excitement which are the equivalent of Epicurus' kinetic pleasures. Likewise all pains are *kinēseis*, namely rough ones, and the unstimulated state is neither pleasant nor painful, but neutral. Since these kinetic pleasures are generally short-lived, the pursuit of pleasure requires their constant renewal.

Epicurus' response is that this kind of pursuit is unrewarding. People who naively expect otherwise set out to cram their lives with luxuries and indulgences, only to find that life becomes no pleasanter thereby. On the contrary, their dependence on luxury makes them needlessly vulnerable to the whims of fortune, and therefore more liable to the pain of deprivation. He concludes that the luxurious life, although undeniably different from the simple life, is not thereby any pleasanter at all. Or, as he puts it in the more doctrinal terms echoed by Torquatus, once all pain has been removed the further positive stimuli of luxurious living to not increase one's pleasure – they only vary it. Given this defence of moderate asceticism, Epicurus has no choice but to hold that once all pain has been removed one has already achieved a pleasant state, since he believes it to be in fact the pleasantest possible state. Therefore painlessness is pleasure – katastematic pleasure, as he calls it, to contrast it with kinetic pleasure.

[23] Gosling and Taylor [53]. However, I dissent from much of their account of Epicurean pleasure, especially their erasure of the normal distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasure. For instance the objection (pp. 370, 374–5, 392–3, etc.) that there are *no* 'static' pleasures because all pleasures are atomic motions relies on the unfounded attribution of atomist reductionism to Epicurus (see Sedley [930]). Above all, I hope that my present argument will help to vindicate (against Gosling and Taylor's objections, esp. pp. 382 ff.) the reliability of Cicero's evidence, including *Fin.* 1.37–8, which makes clear use of the distinction.

His critics, including Cicero in *On Ends* book II, demanded to know why the same word 'pleasure' should be used for two such very different kinds of experience as these.[24] But Epicurus' chosen usage in fact makes excellent sense in its context. According to him, eating sweets when not hungry is, though different, no more pleasant than the satisfied state of simply not being hungry. If we grant him this, it follows that either both conditions – indulgent eating and stable satisfaction – are pleasures, or neither is. To opt for making them both pleasures, as he does, is hardly more counter-intuitive than the alternative of saying that neither is.

So much for Epicurus' ethical motivation and formal justification in excluding the middle state between pleasure and pain. But I now want to suggest a quite different perspective on his motivation. For this, I must go back to his physics.

Atomism had always made a virtue of its metaphysical economy. For Democritus, body and void are defined as 'being and not-being', or 'the full and the empty'. Body and void are thus each defined as the other's formal contradictory. If a thing is not being, it can only be not-being. If it is not full, it must be empty. This simple dyadic scheme has the merit of guaranteeing that body and void are the *sole* contents of the universe. In mapping out the universe, we have only to say of each part of it whether it is full or empty, assured that there is no further possibility. The dyadic scheme, yielding as it were a monochrome map of the universe, may not be the only way of achieving this result, but it is unbeatably economical.

Epicurus' basic ontology is in some ways very different. Void for him is not equated with portions of emptiness, as I believe it was for Democritus, but with space in its (to us) familiar Euclidean sense.[25] That is why I have been describing his ontology throughout as one of body and space, rather than body and void. Epicurean body and space do not combine to produce a monochrome map of the universe, like black and white pixels on a screen. Space is co-extensive with the entire universe, and some parts of space are (temporarily) co-extensive with portions of body, although other parts, called 'void' in the specific sense, are not. Nevertheless, Epicurus follows Democritus' lead in defining body and space as formal contradictories. Anything that has *per se* existence must have some volume. If in addition it has the power of resistance, that makes it a body. If it lacks all power of resistance, so that bodies can pass straight through it, it can only be space. Since everything with volume must be either resistant or non-resistant, it is thus

[24] Cicero *Fin.* II.6 ff., cf. Gosling and Taylor [53], 370.

[25] I argue for this contrast in Sedley [929].

formally established that everything with *per se* existence is either body or space.[26] Atomism quickly follows, because since there is now known to be nothing other than empty space that could punctuate a portion of body, a body with no empty space within it must be perfectly solid.

Given its honourable history and foundational role in atomism, the dyadic ontology must have been highly prized by Epicurus. What could be less surprising, then, than to find him at the corresponding point in his ethics, when drawing up the scale of value, attracted by a dyadic scheme analogous to the one which had borne such fruit when mapping out three-dimensional existence? By eliminating the neutral state, he relates pleasure to pain as body to space, that is, as formal contradictories,[27] thus ensuring a value system in which no further *per se* value can have been overlooked. The full version of the formal argument is, I take it, that all the intrinsic values, positive or negative, of a sentient being lie in how it feels about things, and that any feeling that is not painful is *ipso facto* pleasant, and vice versa. Therefore all *per se* values are, generically, either pleasure or pain.

What if Epicurus *had* allowed a neutral state of feeling between pleasure and pain? Obviously the scheme could no longer be dyadic, but could it not have been successfully triadic? Couldn't the definitions have been framed so as at least to guarantee that any *per se* value belongs to one of the *three* generic categories, pleasant, painful and neutral? In the physics, if there were *per se* existing things which were neither body nor space, there would seem to be no restriction on what they might be, and metaphysical anarchy would break out. But it is hard to envisage a similar danger on the scale of value. Epicurus need hardly fear that to allow an intermediate class of feeling which is neither pleasant nor painful would be to risk the intrusion of a mysterious third value. The third value need only be a neutral hedonic state which is better than pain but worse than pleasure, one that could in principle be accommodated to the hedonistic calculus. In short, it is not clear that a dyadic scheme, for all its conceptual elegance, could ever prove as indispensable to ethics as it was to physics. (Incidentally, this disparity is a ground for assuming, as I have been assuming throughout, that the methodology was evolved originally for physics, for which it is tailor-made, and only thereafter transferred to ethics.)

[26] Lucretius 1.433–9, retaining the MSS order for 434–5.

[27] Body and space, although contradictories, are frequently co-extensive. But this need not constitute a disanalogy with pleasure and pain. For example the kinetic pleasure of drinking may coexist with the pain of incompletely quenched thirst. The height of pleasure is reached when all the remaining pain has gone – just, one might speculate, as pure space, i.e. void, is achieved only when all body has left it.

Despite any such reservations, the ranking of pleasure and pain as formal contradictories was an almost inevitable outcome for Epicurus. His systematic reapplication to ethics of the physical methodology, in which the dyadic analysis had proved so useful, must from the start have inclined him towards the reclassification of the neutral state as pleasure. And the very same move turned out to give him just the realignment of values he needed to work out his disagreement with the Cyrenaics. When both factors are brought together, it seems almost a foregone conclusion that he would opt for the dyadic scheme.

6 The Epicurean good life

We have now seen the parallelism of physical and ethical exposition run through three crucial stages. First a basic dualistic scheme is sketched as self-evident. Secondly it is confirmed, amplified and defended by conceptual analysis. Thirdly it is shown to be an exhaustive dichotomy by defining the two terms as a pair of contradictories.

What follows next, at 40–1, is at first sight rather disconcerting for my analysis. Torquatus switches to a direct argument for pleasure as the *summum bonum*, pain as the *summum malum*. And to a large extent it is conducted by describing the ideally good Epicurean life, and contrasting this with the supremely un-Epicurean life. The good life includes fearlessness based directly on two Epicurean tenets, that death is nothing more than the loss of all sensation, and that intense pain is short-lived, mild pain bearable; and it has other unmistakably Epicurean features. Is he really entitled at this stage to presuppose the Epicurean good life, when so much groundwork still has to be covered?

Now as far as the actual expression *summum bonum* is concerned, there is nothing new or surprising about finding it here. Pleasure was introduced at the outset, back in the Cradle Argument, as the *summum bonum*, and pain as the *summum malum*. The phrase *summum bonum* occurs literally hundreds of times in Cicero's philosophical writings, yet it is by no means clear to me what Greek term it could represent. Expressions like 'the ultimate good' (*to eschaton tōn agathōn*) and 'the primary good' (*to prōton agathon*) are far too rare in Hellenistic philosophy to account for such frequent occurrence. My own guess is that *summum bonum* is in most cases simply Cicero's rendition of 'the good' (*to agathon*). When one looks through the contexts in which it occurs, the overwhelming majority are ones in which the mere word *bonum* would, in the absence of a Latin definite article, have been ambiguous between 'the good' and 'a good'. For instance in the Cradle Argument, where all animals rejoice in pleasure 'as in the highest good' (*ut summo bono*), a mere 'as in the good' (*ut bono*) would have been indistinguishable from 'as in

a good'.[28] The addition of *summum* before *bonum* neatly removes the ambiguity.

Let us take it, then, that *summum bonum* in *Fin.* 1.40–1 just represents 'the good'. For an Epicurean, to call pleasure 'the good' is to label it, if not strictly as the only good thing, at least as the only underivatively good thing, that by courtesy of which other things are good – in other words, the ethical 'end' (*telos*). But the present passage goes further than that. The thing labelled the *summum bonum* (and also, more elaborately, 'the highest (*summum*) or ultimate (*ultimum*) or extreme (*extremum*) of goods, which the Greeks call *telos*') is not pleasure tout court, but the pleasant life (*iucunde vivere*, or *cum voluptate vivere*), the very life amply filled out with a portrayal of the ideal Epicurean. To see what has happened, we need here a distinction between a primitive and a substantive account of the good or the *telos*. In Aristotle, for instance, the primitive account is simply *eudaimonia*, or perhaps 'activity of the soul in accordance with virtue', while the substantive account would be a detailed analysis of this as acted out in the civic life, the contemplative life, or both. What has happened in the course of Torquatus' speech is not a shift in the meaning of *summum bonum*, but a shift from the primitive to the substantive specification of what it consists in. Is this legitimate? How can Torquatus assert that the Epicurean life is the best possible life, when he has not yet even dealt with the question whether virtue has a place in it; or with the relation of mental to bodily pleasure; or with the lessons of physics for dealing with fear of death and god; or with the function of friendship?

Certainly the Epicurean life-style has been looming ever larger in 37–42, and it looks as if it was considered admissible as empirical evidence regarding the correct quantification of pleasure. Thus back at 37 one important source of evidence that pleasure is maximised by the removal of all pain seems to have been the empirical results of the Epicurean life-style. But why choose the present point in the discourse to move on from the primitive characterisation of the good as pleasure to the substantive specification of the ideally good life? The answer, I think, is supplied by what it leads up to – the next long section, 42–54, in which the role of virtue is finally tackled.

In brief, the argument of 42–54 is the familiar Epicurean one that the value possessed by the virtues is not intrinsic but purely instrumental, as a means to pleasure. Wisdom, for example, is of value as the intelligent management of fears and desires, indispensable for securing the most pleasant

[28] The only clear exceptions I have found are a handful of cases where *summum bonum* has to mean 'the greatest good [among others]': Cic. *de Legibus* 1.55, *de Officiis* III.11, 35; and in a couple of speeches close in date to *de Officiis*: *Pro Marcello* 19.9, and *Pro Rege Deiotaro* 37.

possible life. And similar instrumental accounts are offered of the other virtues. The point is, I think, that this instrumental analysis of conventional morality would lack all plausibility if pleasure had still been left as an unrefined notion. To say that wisdom is valuable because it enables us to cram more pleasure into our lives is to invite the standard slurs against Epicurean morality as crude sensualism. To carry the day, Epicurus must say something far more substantive – that wisdom is valuable as a means to the supreme pleasure of a rationally balanced life, one based on a correct understanding of the limits of desire and the nature of the universe and of man. Only by offering the practical model of enlightened hedonism could he hope to achieve this. And that, I think, is quite enough to account for the early appearance in Torquatus' discourse of the ideal Epicurean life.

7 The instrumentality of virtue

Our final task is to examine the instrumental account of virtue in its own right. Here I want to bring in a puzzle about the passage which has been well raised by Phillip Mitsis in his outstanding book *Epicurus' Ethical Theory*.[29] Mitsis writes as follows:

> First of all, the virtues singled out for discussion by Cicero seem to correspond narrowly, and somewhat suspiciously, to a standard Stoic list. Similarly, instead of articulating a positive theory of his own, the Epicurean Torquatus seems at times somewhat too eager to redescribe this standard list in Epicurean terms, as if he were trying to convince a Roman audience that Epicurus' theory really can accommodate commonly recognised features of morality. Perhaps an even greater obstacle in the way of recovering Epicurus' doctrine arises from the potential distortions of Cicero's political and moral vocabulary. For instance, Torquatus rather casually lists *iniustitia* (injustice) with such strong terms of moral disapproval as *improbitas* (depravity), *libido* (violent desire), and *ignavia* (cowardice) (*Fin.* 1.50). Many have argued, though, that this kind of moral censoriousness is uncharacteristic of the Epicurean contract . . . Moreover, Cicero's moral vocabulary is heavily weighted toward societal attitudes and obligations in a way foreign to Epicurus. Torquatus' arguments are generously sprinkled with such common terms of Roman public approval as *liberalitas* (liberality), *caritas* (esteem), and *benevolentia* (kindness) (*Fin.* 1.52). He thereby injects into his account of Epicurean justice strong overtones of social class and social obligation that are absent from Epicurus' own account.

This seems to me to put its finger on a serious problem about the passage. It is only Mitsis' solution that I shall quarrel with. He suggests that

[29] Mitsis [760], 69–70.

Torquatus' account has become contaminated with (a) the Stoic four cardinal virtues, and (b) the value system of Roman society. Before acquiescing in this, we must ask about the passage's methodological function.

At the equivalent point in the physical discourse Epicurus (*Letter to Herodotus* 40, expanded at Lucretius 1.449–82), having shown that all independently or *per se* existing things must be body or space, set out to disqualify all further items that might appear entitled to inclusion in the list. Plato had defended the independent existence of properties like justice and beauty; and anyone, philosophical or not, who accepted Epicurus' contention that space had independent existence was likely to ask why the same should not be true of time. Epicurus' reply was to show systematically how all such items are parasitic on bodies and/or space for their existence, and must therefore be relegated to the status of dependent properties (*sumbebēkota*)[30] of things which themselves do exist *per se* (*kath' hauta*).

In ethics the equivalent stage is clearly as follows. Having shown that *per se* values divide up exhaustively into pleasure and pain, Epicurus must once again set out to disqualify all further items that might appear entitled to inclusion in the list. All the additional positive values that might be proposed must be shown to be valuable not intrinsically, but parasitically on the pleasure they are supposed to generate. And this means not so much working through the items in his own preferred value system, as dealing one by one with the values which others, philosophers and non-philosophers alike, would be likely to put forward for inclusion.

This is all we need to explain the curious character of the passage. Of course it deals with the conventional values of the Platonist ethical tradition and of political society: not because they are privileged within an Epicurean moral framework, but because they are the most prominent explananda, the items of value which most pressingly need to be reduced to the status of derivative rather than intrinsic goods.

Epicurean ethical doctrine can be expected to surface, as indeed it does, only when the actual reductions are being performed. Temperance and courage, for example, are not prominent Epicurean virtues, and are initially described in purely conventional terms (47–9). But then, in accommodating them to a hedonistic framework, Torquatus does press home the relevant Epicurean tenets. Temperance is a route to the maximisation of pleasure, the calculation of which pleasures to forgo for the sake of other, greater pleasures. Courage is achieved by the resolution of anxieties about pain and death, through correct Epicurean understanding of their true nature. He

[30] This is the genus of which 'permanent properties' and 'accidents' (*sumptōmata*) are the two species: see Sedley [1930], 304–9.

does not, of course, mean that everyone who tries to be brave is already, consciously or unconsciously, aiming to be an Epicurean philosopher; just that the aim which characterises courage is, as a matter of fact, achievable only through Epicurean enlightenment.

In short, we must agree with Mitsis that much non-Epicurean morality is included in the passage. But, paradoxically, we need not agree with him that any of it does not stem ultimately from the pen of Epicurus.[31]

8 Epilogue

By now I have traced the parallelism of ethical and physical methodology through four distinct stages: (1) a primitive dyadic sketching-in of the territory; (2) conceptual amplification and defence of the sketch; (3) formal proof of its exhaustiveness; (4) elimination of further claimants to inclusion. Thereafter the parallelism can be followed, if at all, only in rather looser terms. In physics, body will now be refined into atomic chunks, followed *inter alia* by a detailed discussion of their range of shapes and sizes, and of their behaviour in compounds. In ethics, the next step will be the loosely analogous one of classifying individual pleasures and pains into the bodily and the mental, and examining their respective contributions as components in a good life.

I doubt if it would serve any purpose to press the details of this parallelism. My real concern has been limited to structural analogies in the foundational moves of ethics and physics. It will probably be wiser to rest my case there.[32]

[31] Annas [764] and [71], esp. pp. 339 ff., discusses the split in Epicurus' writings between passages which emphasise this tough instrumentalist approach to virtue and others which minimise it, and makes the challenging suggestion that the former are designed to shock, the latter closer to Epicurus' true beliefs. But if I am right about the Cicero text, the instrumentalist analysis is absolutely foundational to Epicurus' moral thought, and should not be argued away. Many texts assert, and none actually denies, that virtue's own value is purely instrumental. What some texts emphasise but others disregard is pleasure's intimate causal dependence on virtue. Torquatus eloquently conveys both aspects – virtue's instrumental role (esp. 42, 54), and its indispensability for pleasure (50).

[32] I am grateful for comments received from audiences at Princeton, Cambridge and Naples, and for further written comments from Julia Annas, Phillip Mitsis, Julius Rocca, Voula Tsouna-McKirahan and Stephen Everson.