

Cicero's Objections to Epicurean Philosophy

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This will be a collection of objections gathered from our Lucretius Today Podcast review of Cicero's "On Ends," annotated with comments as to proper responses.

Initially this will be in sequential order as the argument appears in the book. As the argument gets repetitive we can re-order.

1. Book One

1. As To Physics:

1. Epicurus Borrowed from Democritus while at the same time reviling him;
2. I:VI:20 As to the swerve and downward movement of atoms (which leads to Democritus' determinism);
3. I:VI:20 As to Epicurus' rejection of infinite divisibility;
4. I:VI:20 As to Democritus' view of the size of the sun (which leads to Democritus' skepticism) [Note: Cicero notes that the issue of images by which we see but also think comes from Democritus];

2. As To Canonics / Epistemology / Logic:

1. Epicurus does away with the process of division;
2. Epicurus says nothing about subdivision and partition;
3. Epicurus gives no method for constructing an argument;
4. Epicurus does not show how to unriddle fallacies or clarify ambiguities;
5. Epicurus places his criteria of objective truth in the senses and thinks that it destroys the senses to admit for a moment that they might err in any way;

3. As to Ethics:

1. The pursuit of pleasure as the goal belongs to Aristippus and was better and more frankly advocated by the Cyreniads
2. The Epicurean system is of such a character that no system is more unworthy of the human race, as "Nature has created and shaped us for higher aims."
3. The Torquatii did not look for bodily enjoyment or any pleasure when the ancestor wrenched the necklet from his foe, or punished his son.
4. Cicero alleges that Epicureans do not value mental pleasure. ["What pleasure do you, Torquatus, or what does our friend Triarius here derive from literature, from records and the investigation of historical facts, from conning the poets, from learning by heart so laboriously so many lines? And do not say to me "Why, these very actions bring me pleasure, as theirs did to the Torquati" Never indeed did Epicurus or Metrodorus or any one possessed of any wisdom or any knowledge of the tenets of your school ever maintain such a position by such arguments. And when the question is asked, as it often is, why Epicureans are so numerous, I answer that there are no doubt other motives, but the motive which especially fascinates the crowd is this; they believe their chief to declare that all upright and honourable actions are in themselves productive of delight, or rather pleasure."