

Cicero and Epicureanism

by

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“The Romans have their Cicero, who alone is perhaps worthy of all the philosophers in Greece.”

Voltaire

Over the course of the last ten years of his life, Cicero devoted much effort to exploring and evaluating the three major philosophical schools prevalent at Rome: Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism. His critique of Epicureanism in *De re publica*, Cicero’s earliest philosophical investigation, is especially clear because in this work Cicero explicitly criticizes the political views of that particular school. What is less clear, however, is how the ending of the work, the so-called *Somnium Scipionis*, can be understood as a response to Epicureanism. In this thesis, I shall consider how the *Somnium Scipionis* falls into line with Cicero’s anti-Epicurean stance, and I will suggest that his treatment here sheds light on the way in which he treats Epicureanism in his later philosophical works.

Epicurus, who was the founder of the school that bears his name, aimed to release man from a fear of the gods and the fear of death. It was with this in mind that he adopted the idea of atoms, from Democritus’ conception of the atom (ἄτομον) as an “uncuttable object,” and his conception of the swerve, and his views that pleasure is the greatest good, pain is the greatest evil, and that the absence of pain is the highest pleasure. Prior to Cicero, there were some Latin authors who were adherents of Epicureanism. Not much is known about them, however, because even Cicero did not bother to read them. Lucretius, who died around 55, was the last and most famous of the Roman Epicurean authors who lived within Cicero’s time. He began one epic poem, *De rerum natura*, which he left unfinished at his death. In his epic, Lucretius discusses Epicurean physics, meteorology, the swerve, *atomism*, space/the void, the nature of the soul, epistemology, teleology, and an early theory of evolution. Cicero encountered Epicureanism while studying under Archias, who took Cicero, his brother Quintus, and Atticus to visit the three main schools in Rome- the Stoics, the New Academy, and the Epicureans- in

order for them to learn about philosophy and about these particular philosophies from those who do it best.

Part I: The Somnium Scipionis

Cicero's earliest philosophical work that discusses Epicureanism is *De re publica*. The work is a dialogue in the manner of its inspirations, Plato's *Republic* and *Symposium*. Cicero's commonwealth resembles Plato's ideal society and Aristotle's political theories. In this work, Cicero speaks through men who had been major public figures in the Third Punic War, which ended in 144 BC. The only occasion Cicero himself directly speaks to the reader is in his *exordium* (introduction) where he vehemently attacks the political beliefs of the Epicureans and their view on political duty.

Marcus Cato... might surely have remained at Tusculum in the enjoyment of the leisurely life of that healthful spot near Rome. But he, a madman as our friends maintain, preferred, though no necessity constrained him, to be tossed by the billows and storms of our public life even to an extreme old age, rather than live a life of complete happiness in the calm and ease of such retirement. (*Rep.* 1.1).¹

Cicero stands firmly with tradition and the old guard of Rome. He defends the Stoics and the New Academy and argues against Epicureanism here. He continues his attack on Epicureanism by discussing the amount of activity or inactivity in government and how the lack of active participation in government would have already destroyed Rome. He continues this argument through one of their own metaphors- that of a boat at sea during a storm,

It has always seemed to me that the most amazing of the teaching of learned men is that they deny their own ability to steer when the sea is calm, never having learned the art nor cared to know it, while at the same time they assure us that, when the waves are highest, they will take the helm. (*Rep* 1.11).²

¹ *M. vero Catoni... certe licuit Tusculi se in otio delectare salubri et propinquo loco. Sed homo demens, ut isti putant, cum cogeret eum necessitas nulla, in his undis et tempestatibus ad summam senectutem maluit iactari quam in illa tranquillitate atque otio iucundissime vivere.* All longer translations taken from Loeb Classical Library, all shorter translations are mine.

² *maximeque hoc in hominum doctorum oratione mihi mirum videri solet, quod, qui tranquillo mari gubernare se negent posse, quod nec didicerint nec umquam scire curaverint, iidem ad gubernacula se accessuros profiteantur excitatis maximis fluctibus.*

The Epicureans argue that they will take up the helm when the time is right and the situation is worse than it should be. Cicero argues this point by asking how they can know they will be able to safely steer the ship through the storm if they have never touched the wheel even in calm waters?³

Following this argument, Cicero moves into the background of his dialogue and into the dialogue itself. In a short time, it becomes clear that the dialogue is dominated by three men: Scipio Africanus the younger, Philus, and Laelius. In no work does Cicero mention any credentials or knowledge he has about the Greek philosophers who came before him; however, through the mouth of Scipio, Cicero tries to show that he has some knowledge of those before him. Scipio says,

But I am not satisfied with the works dealing with this subject which the greatest and wisest men of Greece have left us; nor on the other hand am I bold enough to rate my opinion above theirs. Therefore, I ask you to listen to me as one who is neither entirely ignorant of Greek authorities, nor, on the other hand, prefers their views, particularly on this subject, to our own, but rather as to a Roman who, though provided by a father's care with a liberal education and eager for knowledge from boyhood... (*Rep.* 1.36).⁴

While Scipio claims here to have knowledge of the Greek philosophers who have already weighed in on the topic, primarily Plato and Aristotle, this must be Cicero trying to gain some credit for himself with his readers. Cicero ends this book of his *Republic* with Scipio's discussion on how the best form of government consists of a mix of all three of the constitutional forms which Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero recognized: the rule of one (monarchy), the rule of few (oligarchy), and the rule of all (democracy).⁵ Overall, Book One is Cicero's *exordium* against Epicurean political philosophy followed by a dialogue among the characters of the basis of constitutions and what the best constitution is.

³ Cicero, *De re publica*, trans. C.W. Keyes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 27.

⁴ *sed neque his contentus sum, quae de ista consultatione scripta nobis summi ex Graecia sapientissimique homines reliquerunt, neque ea, quae mihi videntur, anteferre illis audeo. quam ob rem peto a vobis, ut me sic audiat, neque ut omnino expertem Graecarum rerum neque ut eas nostris in hoc praesertim genere anteponentem, sed ut unum e togatis patris diligentia non inliberalitur institutum studioque discendi a pueritia incensum...*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-106.

The extent of Cicero's anti-Epicurean stance has not always been recognized by historians of philosophy however. In the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*, Hannah Arendt discusses classical philosophy and how some of the various philosophers from Thales to Boethius looked at the activity of thinking. In her subsection on the Romans, she discusses the Epicurean poet Lucretius and his views on thinking in *De rerum natura*. For Arendt, Lucretius "does not insist on thinking but on knowing. Knowledge acquired by reason will dispel ignorance and thus destroy the greatest evil- fear..."⁶ From Lucretius she moves to Cicero and finds one answer she is looking for. In his *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero says that philosophy and thinking

was a question of making Rome more beautiful and more civilized. Philosophy was a proper occupation for educated men when they had retired from public life and had no more important things to worry about.⁷

From this point onwards, Arendt turns to Cicero's *De re publica* and, more specifically, to the question of its connection with the *Somnium Scipionis*. In Arendt's view the connection is non-existent: "As a matter of fact, nothing even in his *Republic* itself prepares us for the Dream of Scipio at the end- except the lamentations of Book 5..."⁸ Yet, when she discusses the Dream, she focuses on power and how that power translates into the afterlife: "Men who have preserved the *patria* are certain to find their place in heaven and be blessed with eternal time."⁹ For her, what Cicero says and does "stand[s] in open contradiction to what Cicero, in common with other educated Romans, had always believed *and* had expressed even in the same book."¹⁰ Finally, she claims that

...Here thinking means following a sequence of reasoning that will lift you to a viewpoint outside the world of appearances as well as outside your own life. Philosophy is called upon to compensate for the frustrations of politics and, more generally, of life itself.¹¹

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind Vol. One- Thinking* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 158.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

In her view, the Romans, including Cicero, retreated into a world of ideas and thinking in order to escape daily life that could be frustrating or even tedious. While Arendt makes many valid observations, her treatment of classical philosophers topically instead of chronologically does not fully exploit the progression of Cicero's thinking for the *Somnium Scipionis*. If one is to remove Cicero's treatment of Epicureanism from *De re publica*, then perhaps Arendt has a point about the lack of connection between the first five books and the final book of the work.

In *Cicero's Social and Political Thought*, Neal Wood considers the development of Cicero's political theory and social thought. Wood begins his discussion on Natural Law and Natural Justice with a reference to Cicero's *De officiis* before considering *De re publica*. According to Wood, in his *Republic*, "Cicero is contending with the opposing and exceedingly influential view of the Epicureans, among others..."¹² Wood moves into the conception of man and of the state and states that Cicero "is at pains to point out in opposition to Epicureans and Skeptics, that human society arose from man's natural reason and not simply out of human weakness and mutual advantage."¹³ In his discussion of Cicero's treatment of the idea and existence of the state, Wood again acknowledges that, in *De re publica*, "Cicero meets point by point current arguments- most probably those of Epicureans- opposing political activism and service to the state."¹⁴ This point by point argument continues even after *De re publica* all the way in *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, where Cicero

Disputes the Epicurean view... that the state is a convention arising from the weakness of men who institute it by mutual agreement in order to insure their protection and safety. Although accepting the notion that the state is founded on consensus, he believes it originates in nature, not convention.¹⁵

Wood also mentions Cicero's view on the types of state. It should seem as no surprise that Cicero's view on this parallels those of Aristotle. According to Cicero, there are six kinds of state, with three variations

¹² Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 73.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 127-128.

in the amount of those governing and two variations in just and unjust. There exists the Rule of One (a monarchy) in which the Just form is that of a King (*rex*) while the Unjust form is that of a Tyrant (*tyrannus*, Wood uses the word *dominatus*); there exists the Rule of Few which has the Just form of Aristocracy (*optimaties*) and the Unjust form of Oligarchy (*potestas factionis*), and the Rule of Many which holds the Just form of Democracy (*civitas populares*) and the Unjust form of Mob Rule (*dominatus multitudinis*).¹⁶

Jed Atkins in his work, *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason*, discusses Cicero's political theory and how far reason can take one. In his introduction, Atkins gives some credit to Arendt:

Most of what survives from the first three books of the *Republic*, which in fact represents most of what remains of the dialogue, seems unrelated to the work's conclusion. Whereas most of the work appears to defend a life devoted to politics and to uphold Roman ideology, the dialogue concludes with a vision of the cosmos that, if anything, seems to challenge what the earlier books affirmed.¹⁷

Atkins assures the reader, however, that this is not the case and that there was indeed a much larger picture in mind, even if we cannot fully see it today. This is shown by the fact that Cicero's *De legibus* and *De re publica* were intended to fit together just as Plato's *Laws* was meant to complete his *Republic*.¹⁸ In fact, Cicero went so far as to make his characters almost the same as Plato's characters!¹⁹ Atkins suggests that perhaps Arendt was wrong and that there may be a connection between the rest of the work and the *Somnium*:

The key passage occurs when Scipio Africanus vividly describes to his grandson the heavenly courses of the planets, which in turn constitute the ideal of perfect order that follows rational principles... This ideal heavenly order turns out to be a picture of the ideal political order.²⁰

Scipio's language reflects the same language used earlier in *De re publica*. According to Atkins, "Here Scipio applies to constitutional change the same terminology that Philus used to describe the

¹⁶ Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought*, 145.

¹⁷ Jed Atkins, *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

movements of the planets in the orrery. A little later, Scipio again uses astronomical language to describe simple constitutions..."²¹ Atkins points out that when Cicero discusses mixed constitutions, he is not the first to do so.²² Before Cicero, there were Polybius, Thucydides, Aristotle, and Plato. In this way, Cicero is a culmination and a continuation of generations of political thought. Out of these four Greeks, Atkins posits that it was Polybius who made the most impact upon Cicero in this matter

Scipio later cites Polybius as a source for certain details on his own account of Rome's early history. And during the course of his discussion, Scipio refers to the two most striking aspects of Polybius' theory of constitutional change- the cycle of constitutions and the biological metaphor of birth, growth, and maturation.²³

While Polybius did use this language, it must be remembered that he was not the only one to use it. Aristotle not only wrote on the same political theory, but also on biology and other sciences. Atkins provides a point by point approach to his theory that the entirety of *De re publica* is connected through political and astronomical terms and examples.

What is the reason for this change in emphasis in Cicero's philosophical works? If one considers the broad spectrum of Cicero's works and the emphasis he places on Epicureanism in each work, one can see that the emphasis varies from work to work and does not seem to have any continuous de-emphasization over the course of time; it seems that the emphasis changes with the subject of the work and the aim that Cicero is trying to accomplish. In *De re publica*, for example, Cicero is actively combating the anti-political activism of Epicureanism, and in this context it makes sense that he would place emphasis on Epicureanism.

Is there, however, a connection between Books One through Five of *De re publica* and Book Six with the *Somnium scipionis*? As Arendt claimed, there appears to exist no connection between the

²¹ Atkins, *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason*, 54-55.

²² *Ibid.*, 81.

²³ *Ibid.*, 94.

Somnium and the rest of the work.²⁴ Atkins, on the other hand, argues that the work is connected by the astronomical and cosmological language that the elder Scipio is passing onto his grandson. Atkins suggests that the image of the universe is Cicero's metaphor for the perfect constitution. Perhaps the *Somnium* is Cicero's response, the only Latin response, to Epicurean physics as laid out by Lucretius in *De rerum natura*. Thus, the entire *De re publica* is not only Cicero's answer to the perfect constitution, but is also an attack on Epicureanism on all fronts, from their political views to their conception of the cosmos itself. This approach, as I hope to show in the second part of my work, is consistent throughout the remainder of Cicero's philosophical works through his *De officiis*. This approach would also make Cicero's anti-Epicureanism an over-arching theme throughout his works. If, therefore, he is trying to discuss how to handle duties in politics, it makes sense that he would have a far lesser emphasis on Epicureanism, a philosophical school that offered no guidance on political actions. The extent of Cicero's treatment of Epicureans also depends on the nature of the work itself. If, for example, he is discussing the Stoic paradoxes, then it is logical that he would not focus on Epicureanism. If he is presenting a balanced debate between the three schools on the nature of the gods, even though the Epicurean school does not have much to offer, then it is fair that he devotes a whole book to the Epicurean in which the Skeptic gets to have his response to Epicureanism in the same book. In other words, the reason for the change in emphasis among the works of Cicero is that the aim and subject matter of all the works are different.

As discussed above, Cicero opens his *De re publica* with an attack on Epicurean political philosophy; the attack, however, does not stop there. In Book Six in the *Somnium Scipionis*, Cicero presents three ideas in opposition to Epicureanism and, more particularly, Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. These three ideas are: the survival of the soul after death, a system of physics for the cosmos that is not

²⁴ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 3. However, she puts a disclaimer in her introduction that she is not a philosopher and is trying to do work in philosophy.

ab Fortuna, and the possibility of rewards in the after-life. These points are used as an opposing, more logical view to the views in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. Lucretius suggests that the soul is mortal since it is made up of atoms; thus, it is illogical to fear death. He suggests that the world is not eternal, but that the world is infinite in extent.

For Lucretius, the soul was not immortal since it was made up of the "minute particles and elements much smaller than the flowing liquid of water or cloud or smoke."²⁵ Moreover, at death "the spirit also is spread abroad and passes away far more quickly, and is more speedily dissolved into its first bodies as soon as it has departed from the limbs of a man."²⁶ Lucretius makes an analogy between the body as a container and the soul as the liquid inside it.²⁷ If a broken jar cannot hold water, then what logically allows the soul to remain inside a broken body (e.g. a dead or mutilated body)? If the body can be broken, can succumb to disease and weakness, and is mortal, and if the mind and soul (for, in this section, mind and soul are the same thing to Lucretius) can succumb to various maladies and disorders, should this not then make the soul and mind mortal as well?²⁸ Since the soul is made of atoms, would it not make sense that the smallest hole would allow the atoms to pass forth from the body into the void to be recycled into something or someone else, especially if the body or soul is already broken? And since, as it has been discussed, the soul is mortal and doomed to die, according to Lucretius, death is to be nothing to mankind.²⁹ Death brings no worries to any man, in fact:

For, if by chance anyone is to have misery and pain in the future, he must himself also exist then in that time to be miserable. Since death takes away this possibility, and forbids him to exist for whom those inconveniences may be gathered together, we may be sure that there is nothing to be feared after death, that he who is not cannot be miserable, that it makes not one

²⁵ *Principio quoniam tenuem constare minutis/ corporibus docui multoque minoribus esse/ principiis factam quam liquidus umor aquai/ aut nebula aut fumus* DRN 3.425-428.

²⁶ *Crede animam quoque diffundi multoque perire/ ocius et citius dissolvi in corpora prima,/ cum semel ex hominis membris ablata recessit* DRN 3.437-439.

²⁷ DRN 3.440-444

²⁸ DRN 3.506-509

²⁹ DRN. 3.830-831

jot of difference whether or not he has ever been born, when death the immortal has taken away his life. (DRN 3.862-869)³⁰

Death is simply the end of everything. It is the end of sensation and feeling and existence. No matter how good the man or how much one might wish to avoid death “there is an end fixed for the life of mortals, and death cannot be avoided, but die we must.... That everlasting death will still be waiting, and no less long a time will he be no more, who has made an end of life with to-day’s sun” (DRN 3.1079-1080, 1091-1093)³¹

As inevitable as death is, the remainder of *De rerum natura* is not nearly as bleak. Of particular interest are Lucretius’ thoughts upon the universe which has not always existed and will not exist infinitely.³² While the universe and the items in it may not always exist, their atoms will continue to exist and to return and to renew other atoms and items.³³ Now, once more following the atomic theory, Lucretius asserts that “the world is not made up of a solid body, since there is void intermingled in things” (DRN 5.364-365),³⁴ which built the universe by “no design of the first-beginnings that led them to place themselves each in its own order with keen intelligence, nor assuredly did they make any bargain what motions each should produce.” (DRN 5.419-421)³⁵ While for Lucretius the universe simply just came into existence with no design or beginning for certain, he does not claim whether or not the planets in the sky revolved around the earth or just simply remained in their spots,³⁶ but he does indeed

³⁰ *Debet enim, misere si forte aegreque futurumst,/ ipse quoque esse in eo tum tempore, cui male possit/ accidere. Id quoniam mors eximit, esseque probet/ illum cui possint incommoda conciliari,/ scire licet nobis nil esse in morte timendum,/ nec miserum fieri qui non est posse, neque hilum/ differre an nullo fuerit iam tempore natus,/ mortalem vitam mors cum immortalis ademit.*

³¹ *Certa quidem finis vitae mortalibus adstat,/ nec devitari letum pote quin obeamus... mors aeterna tamen nilo minus illa manebit,/ nec minus ille diu iam non erit, ex hodierno/ lumine qui finem vitae fecit, et ille,/ mensibus atque annis qui multis occidit ante.*

³² DRN 5.243B-246.

³³ DRN 5.275B-278.

³⁴ *At neque, uti docui, solido cum corpore mundi/ naturast, quoniam admixtumst in rebus inane.*

³⁵ *Nam certe neque consilio primordia rerum/ ordine se suo quaeque sagaci mente locarunt/ nec quos quaeque darent motus pepigere profecto.*

³⁶ DRN 5.509-516.

assert that the earth is staying in place in the center of the universe.³⁷ Lucretius' universe, while made *ab Fortuna*, was infinite, with no end, with no extremities.³⁸ While Lucretius believed in a mortal soul made up of atoms in an infinite universe comprised of atoms made *ab Fortuna*, Cicero held a very different view.

For Cicero, the universe is "joined together by the nine orbits or preferable globes" (*Rep.* 6.17)³⁹ and is geocentric.⁴⁰ This model of the universe had the planets make a pitch based on the movement of the planets and their distance from the Earth that fills the universe with music.⁴¹ Cicero also provides an early version of some of Newton's laws of motion. One of these is that a body in motion stays in motion unless acted upon by an outside force, such as "that which always moves is eternal...but that which is moved by another force, it is necessary for it to end" (*Rep.* 6.27)⁴² Unfortunately, Cicero tries to discern the beginning of all things and of all movements and finds himself stuck in the Aristotelian paradox: if movement is eternal, it cannot be born nor can it die; therefore, is motion truly eternal or did some outside force begin the motion of the universe?⁴³ With this in mind, Cicero says that the body is moved by the soul, but that soul is eternal and moves other things, such as the "corporeal prison" of the body itself.⁴⁴ With the soul being immortal, it needs somewhere to go after death. Upon death, should the soul have achieved the appropriate duties and glories assigned for it, the soul is allowed to enter into the *templum* by god and lives on in the memory of men.⁴⁵ Scipio the Elder describes this afterlife

Such a life is the road to the skies, to that gathering of those who have completed their earthly lives and been relieved of the body, and who live in yonder place which you now see" (it was the

³⁷ DRN 5.534.

³⁸ DRN 1.958-959.

³⁹ *Novem tibi orbibus vel potius globis conexas sunt omnia.*

⁴⁰ *Rep.* 6.17.

⁴¹ *Rep.* 6.18.

⁴² *Nam quod semper movetur, aeternum est...quodque ipsum agitur aliunde, quando finem habet motus, vivendi finem habeat necesse est.*

⁴³ *Rep.* 6.27.

⁴⁴ *Rep.* 6.15.

⁴⁵ *Rep.* 6.15.

circle of light which blazed most brightly among the other fires), “and which you on earth, borrowing a Greek term call the Milky Circle. (*Rep.* 1.16)⁴⁶

But what is the soul? How does it work? Scipio the Elder explains it thus

...Be sure that it is not you that is mortal, but only your body. For that man whom your outward form reveals is not yourself; the spirit is the true self, not that physical figure which can be pointed out by the finger. Know, then, that you are a god, if a god is that which lives, sees, feels, remembers, and foresees, and which rules, governs, and moves the body over which it is set, just as the supreme God above us rules this universe. And just as the eternal God moves the universe, which is partly mortal, so an immortal spirit moves the frail body. (*Rep.* 1.26)⁴⁷

Scipio the elder has explained to the Younger that the soul is immortal and has the hope of an afterlife.

But what is the soul to do during this afterlife? Is there anything to look forward to in the afterlife? For it is in “this place, where eminent and excellent men find their true reward” (*Rep.* 6.25),⁴⁸ since men honor the fame of great men for a small portion of the year.⁴⁹ The only way to reach this place and its rewards is “by the charms of Virtue herself to true glory.”⁵⁰ Before Scipio the Younger awakes, however, the Elder warns him

For the spirits of those who are given over to sensual pleasures and have become their slaves, as it were, and who violate the laws of gods and men at the instigation of those desires which are subservient to pleasure- their spirits, after leaving their bodies, fly about close to the earth, and do not return to this place except after many ages of torture. (*Rep.* 6.29).⁵¹

⁴⁶ *Ea vita via est in caelum et in hunc coetum eorum, qui iam vixerunt et corpore laxati illum incolunt locum, quem vides (erat autem is splendidissimo candore inter flammis circus elucens), quem vos, ut a Graecis accepistis, orbem lacteum nuncupatis.*

⁴⁷ *Sic habeto, non esse te mortalem, sed corpus hoc; nec enim tu is es, quem forma ista declarat, sed mens cuiusque is est quisque, non ea figura, quae digito demonstrari potest. Deum te igitur scito esse, siquidem est deus, qui viget, qui sentit, qui meminit, qui providet, qui tam regit et moderatur et movet id corpus, cui praepositus est, quam hunc mundum ille princeps deus; et ut mundum ex quadam parte mortalem ipse deus aeternus, sic fragile corpus animus sempiternus movet.*

⁴⁸ *In hunc locum...in quo omnia sunt magnis et praestantibus viris, quanti tandem est ista hominum Gloria.*

⁴⁹ *Rep.* 6.25.

⁵⁰ *Ipsa virtus trahat ad verum decus* *Rep.* 6.25.

⁵¹ *Namque eorum animi, qui se corporis voluptatibus dederunt earumque se quasi ministros praebuerunt impulsuque libidinum voluptatibus oboedientium deorum et hominum iura violaverunt, corporibus elapsi circum terram ipsam volutantur nec hunc in locum nisi multis exagitati saeculis revertuntur.*

Throughout the *Somnium*, the elder Scipio shows to the younger Scipio how the universe works, that the soul is immortal and, upon completion of its duties, may be allowed to enter into the *templum* of God, but to be careful for those who follow pleasure (Epicureans) are not allowed into the *templum* for many ages until they have 'atoned' for their lack of duty.

In the *Somnium*, the elder Scipio then describes how the universe works, he discusses how nature makes music, climates. Essentially the elder Scipio imparts to the younger Scipio how the universe runs and how things happen in nature. Cicero has to make some small connection somewhere so that the work did not utterly confuse the reader, but he had to have another motive for writing the *Somnium*, for surely he was too meticulous and thoughtful for some random piece of nonsense. The logical conclusion is that Cicero wrote the *Somnium* as a response to argue against Epicurean physics. This argument is consistent with Cicero's other works that provide a total overarching theme of anti-Epicureanism through a universal model, active virtue and passive injustice.

Part II: The Fall and the Distraction

At the time of the writing of the *De re publica* in 55 B.C.E.⁵², the government in Rome had, for the most part, fallen under the will of the First Triumvirate. While the Triumvirate was occupied in various corners of the Republic, the consular elections for 54 had fallen into a gang war between the followers of Milo and the followers of Clodius. This gang war lasted for three years and disrupted the consular elections until 51 when Pompey was named sole consul and Clodius was killed by one of Milo's bodyguards. Although Cicero was the pre-eminent advocate and statesman, he lost the case against Milo. It had become obvious with this trial that Cicero had chosen the wrong side and, as a result, he was no longer in the high position from which he could influence the happenings of the state. He used this time of lessened influence to semi-retire from his active life and begin to focus more upon his

⁵² All dates are B.C.E.

writings on rhetoric, oratory, and philosophy. Moreover, he placed a greater amount of time into philosophy and advocating political activism and involvement through Stoicism in particular. This Stoic idea of involvement and public duty is shown in the *De re publica* and the *De Officiis* in force. During this time, from 55 to 44, Rome was in a constant state of turmoil which created a political crisis that Cicero could use to further advance Stoicism, the New Academy and his anti-Epicurean ideas subtly outside of *De natura deorum*. These thoughts are absorbed in Cicero's effort to develop a philosophical policy that could work in Rome.

The continuation of the conversation on Epicureanism is in his collection of six essays on Stoicism entitled *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (Paradoxes of the Stoics). In these essays, Cicero discusses what he thinks are the Stoic paradoxes that were the ethical mantras of the Stoics. He discusses and admonishes Epicureanism in the first three essays in this collection, but, for no apparent reason, there is no mention of Epicureanism in the second three essays. Cicero holds his discussion of Epicureanism by using the Stoic Paradoxes to show how Epicurean philosophy is wrong. For example, in paragraphs fourteen and fifteen at the end of the first paradox, Cicero says that the Epicureans

...Skillfully hold and carefully defend it, that pleasure is the highest good. It seems to me to be a statement of cattle, not men... Is anything good which does not make him who possesses it better?" (PS 14)⁵³

Seeing the two as polar opposites, Cicero used the paradox "What should be Morally Sound is alone the Greatest Good" in order to fight the Epicurean notion that pleasure is the highest good (PS 6).⁵⁴

After a ten-year hiatus in writing philosophical works, Cicero returns to the field with his work *De finibus bonorum et malorum*. In this work, Cicero sought to find what might be the best good and the worst evils. After his *exordium*, Cicero opens Book One with "We should begin from the easiest, let us

⁵³ ... *illud arte tenent accurateque defendunt, voluptatem esse summam bonum. Quae quidem mihi vox pecudum videtur esse, non hominum... Quicquamne bonum est quod non eum qui id possidet meliorem facit?*

⁵⁴ *Quod honestum sit id solum bonum esse*

first pass in review the system of Epicurus..." (*Fin* 1.13).⁵⁵ With this, Cicero was suggesting that Epicureanism is simplistic as a philosophy with no great controversies or thoughts behind it. His argument is supported implicitly by his introduction to his first conversation of Lucius Torquatus, an Epicurean, who once "had defended the thought of Epicurus about pleasure..." (*Fin* 1.13).⁵⁶ To Torquatus, Cicero's language evokes a disdain of Epicureanism: "...Certainly I am resolved to hear the reason why you regard my master Epicurus, not indeed with hatred, as those who do not share his views mostly do, but at all event with disapproval." (*Fin* 1.14).⁵⁷ Torquatus follows this up with his own theory on why Cicero does not like Epicurus, "But I think you...are delighted less by him because that man neglected the embellishment of speech of Plato, of Aristotle, of Theophrastus. For I am scarcely able to be persuaded to this indeed, that what that man thought seemed not true to you" (*Fin* 1.14).⁵⁸ Cicero put this question to rest by saying that he himself had no problem with Epicurus' style, that Epicurus clearly stated his ideas; however, in the area Epicurus is proudest of, he is merely copying Democritus, but "therefore that which he wishes to improve seems to me to make it worse indeed" (*Fin* 1.17).⁵⁹ Considering all these mistakes and errors, Cicero concludes that Epicurean physics is nothing more than "ficta pueriliter"⁶⁰ and Epicurean logic (or lack thereof) is of "The sort that nothing would seem more unworthy" (*Fin* 1.23).⁶¹ Cicero finishes his claims by saying that he cannot accept these doctrines.⁶² Even though these statements fall in line with what Cicero himself seemed to think about Epicurean philosophy, he followed his argument with the claim that "When I said this, it was more to provoke him

⁵⁵ *Ut autem a facillimis ordiamur, prima veniat in medium Epicuri ratio...*

⁵⁶ *defense est Epicuri setentia de voluptate...*

⁵⁷ *...certe audiam quid sit quod Epicurum nostrum non tu quidem oderis, ut fere faciunt qui ab eo dissentiunt, sed certe non probes...*

⁵⁸ *sed existimo te... minus ab eo delectari quod ista Platonis, Aristoteli, Theophrasti orationis ornamenta neglexerit. Nam illud quidem adduci vix possum, ut ea quae senserit ille tibi non vera videantur.*

⁵⁹ *ita ut ea quae corrigere vult mihi quidem depravare videatur.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶¹ *eiusmodi esse iudico ut nihil homine videatur indignius.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 28.

than that I myself was declaring..." (*Fin* 1.26).⁶³ The remainder of Book One is a dialogue among Cicero, Torquatus, and their friend Triarius, the last two men being Epicureans, discussing the Highest Good in life and trying to find simultaneously the Ultimate Evil in life.

Book Two opens with Cicero delivering the discourse he did not wish to give for the sake of discussion. In the dialogue of this book, the three men turn to parsing terms, e.g. Good, Bad, End, End of Goods. In his opening statement, Cicero makes the bold statement that "Epicurus himself does not know and wavers on this point..." (*Fin* 2.6).⁶⁴ Then following an interjection and objection from Torquatus, Cicero makes the even more astounding statement that "...Either Epicurus or all men who everywhere do not know what pleasure is." (*Fin* 2.6).⁶⁵ Torquatus then does his best to explain what the Highest Good is. For him, according to Epicurus, pleasure is the Highest Good, but freedom from pain is the greatest pleasure. Cicero, at this point, is beginning to become frustrated with Torquatus and argues:

"If then," said I, "according to your account the Chief Good consists entirely in feeling no pain, why do you not keep to this without wavering? Why do you not maintain this conception of the Good and no other? What need is there to introduce so abandoned a character as Mistress Pleasure into the company of those honourable ladies the Virtues? Her very name is suspect and lies under a cloud of disrepute- so much so that you Epicureans are fond of telling us that we do not understand what Epicurus means by pleasure. I am a reasonable good-tempered disputant, but for my own part when I hear this assertion (and I have encountered it fairly often), I am sometimes inclined to be a little irritated. Do I not understand the meaning of the Greek word *hedone*, the Latin *voluptas*? Pray which of these two languages am I not acquainted with? Moreover, how comes it that I do not know what the word means, while all and sundry who have elected to be Epicureans do? As for that, your sect argues very plausibly that there is no need for the aspirant to philosophy to be scholar at all." (*Fin* 2.11-12).⁶⁶

⁶³ *Quae cum dixissem, magis ut illum provocarem quam ut ipse loquerer...*

⁶⁴ *Nunc autem dico ipsum Epicurum nescire et in eo nutare...*

⁶⁵ *...aut Epicurus quid sit voluptas aut omnes mortales qui ubique sunt nesciunt.*

⁶⁶ *Quis dubitas igitur," inquam, "summo bono a te ita constituto ut id totum in non dolendo sit, id tenere unum, id tueri, id defendere? Quid enim necesse est, tamquam meretricem in matronarum coetum, sic voluptatem in virtutem concilium adducer? Individiosum nomen est, infame, suspectum. Itaque hoc frequenter dici solet a vobis, non intellegere nos quam dicat Epicurus voluptatem. Quod quidem mihi si quando dictum est (est autem dictum non parum saepe), etsi satis clemens sum in disputando, tamen interdum soleo subirasci. Egone non intellego, quid sit ἡδονή Graece, Latine 'voluptas'? utram tandem linguam nescio? Deinde qui fit, ut ego nesciam, sciant omnes quicumque Epicurei esse voluerunt? Quod vestri quidem vel optime disputant, nihil opus esse eum qui futurus sit philosophus scire litteras.*

Cicero continues on this train of thought by discussing his knowledge of Latin, Greek, and philosophy and proving his point by quoting the inscription over the Temple of Delphi- γνῶθι σεαυτόν- and arguing that Epicurus is purposefully vague in his materials and discussions by not defining his terms and by trying to combine two unlike things, pleasure and absence from pain.⁶⁷ In this sense, Epicurus is inconsistent unlike other philosophers who assign pleasure as the Highest Good. Such other philosophers as Aristippus, Hieronymus, and Carneades, decided what their Highest Good was and then built their philosophy from the ground up. Yet, Epicurus says that pleasure (*voluptas*) is the highest good, but that freedom from pain is the highest pleasure (which is two completely different things to Cicero) and that the easiest way to gain this absence from pain is through the senses (a completely different third item to Cicero).⁶⁸ For this, Epicurus and his philosophy make no sense to Cicero and cannot be a legitimate philosophy and must be argued at all costs for something that must make more sense, like Stoicism or Peripateticism. The remainder of this dialogue on Epicureanism is spent discussing friendship, a topic that would return as the basis for another of Cicero's works the following year.

Cicero opens the third Book of this work with the results of the debate from the previous two books:

My dear Brutus, were Pleasure able to speak for herself, in default of such redoubtable advocates as she now has to defend her, my belief is that she would own defeat. The question before us is, where is that Chief Good, which is the object of our inquiry, to be found? Pleasure we have eliminated; the doctrine that the End of Goods consists in freedom from pain is open to almost identical objections; and in fact no Chief Good could be accepted that was without element of Virtue, the most excellent that that can exist. (*Fin* 3.1-2).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 96-102.

⁶⁸ Cicero, *De finibus*, 122.

⁶⁹ *Voluptatem quidem, Brute, si ipsa pro se loquatur nec tam pertinaces habeat patronos, concessuram arbitror, convictam superior libro, dignitati... Querendum est enim ubi sunt sit illud summum bonum quod reperire volumus quoniam et voluptas ab eo remota est et eadem fere contra eos dici possunt qui vacuitatem doloris finem bonorum esse voluerunt; nec vero ullum probetur ut summum bonum quod virtute careat, qua nihil possit esse praestantius.*

After this quick summary of Books One and Two, Cicero moves to discussing Stoicism in Books Three and Four. In these books, Cicero is full of high praise for Stoicism, citing only a couple of problems in their philosophical work. In Book Five, Cicero turns to the New Academy and points out that the two schools are the same school with only the minor difference of one word that means the same thing to any person. This small difference is that the Stoics say that being Moral is the Highest Good, but the New Academy follows that being Ethical is the Highest Good. The last half of Book Five is spent in a discussion between the Academic and Cicero about the differences of the Stoics and the Academies. All in all, Cicero writes the first two books to show how many problems exist with Epicureanism that deal with the matters at hand, while he utilizes the other three books to show how the Stoics and the Academics are truly the same school.

Cicero wrote the *Tusculan Disputations* in the same year. In this work, Cicero tries to tackle some of the big philosophical questions about life. These topics are: that death is an evil, that pain is the greatest of all evils, how to alleviate distress in life, “If the wise man is free from distress, then why not all other disorders?”, and finally “Is virtue sufficient for living a happy life?”.

In Book One, Cicero approaches the question “Is death an evil?”⁷⁰ What better place to begin the conversation about death than with Epicureanism, the one philosophy that absolutely dismisses death and tries to remove the fear of death? And who better to discuss the finer points of Epicureanism than the Epicurean who was the closest to Cicero, Atticus? Atticus begins the conversation with the normal Epicurean thought: “Malum mihi videtur esse mors.”⁷¹ Following this bold statement is a discussion between Atticus and Cicero in which Cicero combats Atticus’ Epicureanism with the statement

⁷⁰ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J.E. King (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 10.

⁷¹ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 10.

There is, it is true, Democritus, a man of undoubted power, but, as he makes the soul consist of minute smooth round bodies brought together in some sort of accidental collision, let us pass him over; for there is nothing which thinkers of his school cannot construct out of a swarm of atoms. (TD 1.22).⁷²

After more discussions, Cicero wore Atticus down to the point at which Atticus concedes that Cicero has won this discussion.⁷³ Yet, Cicero cedes that

How can it, do you ask? Crowds of opponents are coming, not merely Epicureans- whom for my part I do not despise, though somehow or other to my regret all the best philosophers are contemptuous of them... (TD 1.77).⁷⁴

Here, once again, Cicero says that he does not hate the Epicureans, but also that he will not stop others from hating Epicureanism.

From here, Cicero begins his *exordium* in Book Two. He starts with a quick summary of Epicurean views on death, and agrees with them, but he also says of some Epicurean authors “For there is a class of men, who wished to be called philosophers and are said to be responsible for quite a number of books in Latin, which I do not for my part despise, for I have never read them...” (TD 2.7).⁷⁵ Cicero says that he has not read these Roman Epicureans “but as on their own testimony the writers claim to be indifferent to definition, arrangement, precision and style I forbear to read what affords no pleasure.” (TD 2.7).⁷⁶ He continues down this path saying that this lack of style and care for their writing has led to Latin Epicurean writings to be essentially unread by anyone except by Epicureans, quite unlike the writings of Plato and Aristotle who put some amount of effort into their writings.⁷⁷ And thus begins the discussion on whether or not pain is the chief evil.⁷⁸ Once again, Cicero strikes the first blow against

⁷² *Democritum enim, magnum illum quidem virum, sed levibus et rotundis corpusculis efficientem animum concursu quodam fortuito, omittamus. Nihil est enim apud istos quod non atomorum turba conficiat.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁴ *Qui possit rogas? Catervae veniunt contra dicentem, nec solum Epicureorum, quos equidem non despicio, sed nescio quo modo doctissimus quisque contemnit...*

⁷⁵ *Est enim quoddam genus eorum, qui se philosophos appellari volunt, quorum dicuntur esse Latini sane multi libri, quos non contemno equidem, quippe quos numquam legerim...*

⁷⁶ *quia profitentur ipsi illi, qui eos scribunt, se neque distincte neque distribute neque eleganter neque ornate scriber, lectionem sine ulla delectatione negligo.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations.*, 160.

Epicureanism with "...Then to this powerless and effeminate thought Epicurus granted enough teachability to himself..." (TD 2.15).⁷⁹ He continues in this direction by pointing out yet another paradox of Epicureanism: "He, who alone says this is evil and the end of all evils, the wise man will say he counts this is sweet" (TD 2.17).⁸⁰ This is followed by the idea that an Epicurean wise man would say that the inside of the Phalarian Bull is absolute comfort!⁸¹ After a brief verbal side-trip in which Cicero and Atticus blame poets for this idea of pain as the worst evil, Cicero comes back to remove blame from the poets and lays it all the more heavily upon Epicurus. Cicero paraphrases Epicurus as "...he says the greater evil to be moderate pain than the greatest disgrace; for in this disgrace nothing is evil, if no pain follows" (TD 2.28).⁸² Cicero then moves onto his own analysis of this statement and the absurdity he finds in it- "What pain then does Epicurus feel when he actually affirms that pain is the greatest evil? And yet I cannot find any worse disgrace than such a sentiment in the mouth of a philosopher." (TD 2.28).⁸³ The discussion between Atticus and Cicero quickly comes back to the inconsistency in Epicurus' philosophy when Cicero states

He warns as much as he knows: 'Neglect' he says, 'pain' Who says this? The same person to whom pain is the Greatest Evil. It is scarcely consistent enough. We should listen. 'If pain is the greatest' he says, 'it should be short' (TD 2.44).⁸⁴

This book closes with Cicero and Atticus amicably discussing their plans for the next day's discussion.⁸⁵

Book Three reflects upon Atticus' suggested topic that "the wise man falls into sorrow" (TD 3.7).⁸⁶ The discussion here, as in the other books, is not so much a debate but a topic put forth by

⁷⁹ *...deinde ad hanc enervatam muliebremque sententiam satis docilem se Epicurus praeibit...*

⁸⁰ *hic, qui solum hoc malum dicit et malorum omnium extremum, sapientem censet id suave dicturum.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *...maius dicit esse malum mediocre dolorem quam maximum dedecus; in ipso enim dedecore mali nihil esse, nisi sequantur dolores.*

⁸³ *Quis igitur Epicurum sequitur dolor, cum hoc ipsum dicit, summum malum esse dolorem? quo dedecus maius a philosopho nullum exspecto.*

⁸⁴ *tantum monet, quantum intelligit: "Neglige" inquit "dolorem." Quis hoc dicit? Idem qui dolorem summum malum. Vix satis constanter. Audiamus. "Si summus dolor est" inquit, "brevem necesse est esse."*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁸⁶ *cadere in sapientiam aegritudo.*

Atticus in which Cicero proceeds to disprove Epicureanism point by point with discussions and claims such as “...the whole book is capable for being thrown away...” (TD 3.44).⁸⁷ This method of discussion occurred in Books One and Two and it only continues in Books Three and Four before. In Book Five, Cicero begins to point out the problems with Epicurus himself. Cicero says that while Epicurus “speaks often clearly; for how he does not work to himself he says constantly and conveniently” (TD 5.26).⁸⁸ These attacks continue as Cicero claims that Epicurus is not a philosopher, but “one who only puts on the mask of a philosopher and he abuses that name to himself...” (TD 5.73:)⁸⁹ and “...he mocks this our honesty and base...” (TD 5.73).⁹⁰ In this final book of these discussions, as he tries to defend the Stoic philosophy that Virtue is the Greatest Good, Cicero essentially levels the accusation that Epicurus has no virtue and therefore had no way in which to be happy. Overall, in his *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero seems to hold these daily discussions with Atticus in order to combat and systematically disprove Epicureanism.

Immediately following the *Disputations* was the work *De natura deorum*. This work is written in three books with each book focusing on one of the schools of philosophy. Book One focuses on Epicureans views of the gods, Book Two on Stoic views, and Book Three on New Academy Skeptic views and Cicero’s ‘answer’ to the question of the gods.

This work is set during Cicero’s tenure in the College of Augurs, and the discussion is held among Gaius Cotta, an Academic, Gaius Velleius, an Epicurean Senator who was the unofficial head of the school, and Quintus Lucius Balbus, a Roman Stoic.⁹¹ After posing the question of the nature of the gods, Cicero allows Velleius to take the floor who

⁸⁷ ...*totus liber potius abiiciendus...*

⁸⁸ *multa praeclare saepe dicit; quam enim sibi constanter convenienterque dicat non laborat.*

⁸⁹ *qui tantum modo induit personam philosophi et sibi ipse hoc nomen inscripsit...*

⁹⁰ ...*haec nostra honesta turpia irrideat...*

⁹¹ Cicero, *De natura deorum*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 16, 18.

In the confident manner (I need not say) that is customary with Epicureans, afraid of nothing so much as lest he should appear to have doubts about anything. One would have supposed he had just come down from the assembly of the gods in the intermundane spaces of Epicurus! (*DND* 1.18).⁹²

In this almost arrogant manner, Velleius proceeds to argue against Platonic and Stoic ideas on the nature of the gods, characterizing them as mere imagination.⁹³ This is followed by Velleius making the same claims about Plato's view of the Earth being spherical and rotating through the void.⁹⁴ He proceeds to call any notion about the nature of the gods ridiculous, even that of Democritus who first came up with the concept of atoms!⁹⁵ Finally, after going through and attempting to destroy every notion about the existence and nature of the gods, Velleius, once again, in his arrogance, states "anyone who considers that they speak more rashly and by chance, ought to worship Epicurus and to have in that number of them about whom this is inquired" (*DND* 1.43).⁹⁶ Following this statement, Velleius proceeds to suggest that the gods exist only because everyone believes in them; even the uneducated country bumpkins with no outside contact.⁹⁷ Since the gods do indeed exist, he continues, it must be that they are harmless and cannot be harmed since pain is a mortal experience.⁹⁸ With this conclusion then, he claims that "Free from these fears by Epicurus and avenged in freedom we do not fear these things which we know neither to shape any vexation for themselves not to seek it for others..." (*DND* 1.56).⁹⁹ Following this discourse, Cotta is praised for having a style "distincte graviter ornate" unlike every other Epicurean.¹⁰⁰ This praise is immediately followed by Cotta stating "as unpleasantly such talent should have been born (should you forgive me) in such inconsiderable things, I should not say to have fallen

⁹² *ut solet isti, nihil tam verens quam ne dubitare aliqua de re videretur, tamquam modo ex deorum concilio et ex Epicuri intermundiis descendisset...*

⁹³ Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 20.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁶ *Ea qui consideret quam inconsulte ac temere dicantur, venerari Epicurum et in eorum ipsorum numero de quibus haec quaestio est habere debeat.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 44,46.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *His terroribus ab Epicuro soluti et in libertatem vindicate nec metuimus eos quos intellegimus nec sibi fingere ullam molestiam nec alteri quaerere...*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 56, 58.

into such silly thoughts” (DND 2.59).¹⁰¹ Cotta also points out that no one at this discussion knows all the beliefs of all the nations and tribes in the world and that people before have denied the existence of the gods.¹⁰² As Velleius arrogantly denied the work of any previous philosopher to be true, Cotta returns the favor about Epicurean physics and theology. He states “Now in the first place, there are no such things as atoms. For there is nothing... incorporeal, but all is filled with material bodies; hence there can be no such thing as void, and no such thing as an invisible body.” (DND 1.65).¹⁰³ During this discussion of Epicurean atomism, Cotta points out that Epicureanism is in the business of making paradoxes and when these paradoxes return as a problem, they make up some random piece of nonsense, like the swerve, that is completely unexplained and comes *ex nihilo*.¹⁰⁴ This book ends with Cotta’s discourse on the errors of Epicureanism.

Book Two opens with Velleius admitting that he was incautious to try to argue against someone fully educated.¹⁰⁵ Here, Balbus picks up the discussion and holds his discourse upon the Stoic view on the nature of the gods. He pleads with Velleius “In the meantime, pray, Velleius, do not parade your school’s utter ignorance of science.” (DND 2.47).¹⁰⁶ Balbus points out that the Stoic gods are a far cry from the Epicureans gods: “which Epicurus, having respected it, has devised outlined gods and no agents” (DND 2.59).¹⁰⁷ Balbus even goes so far as to say

Can any sane person see this entire description of stars and this great decoration of the sky from bodies here and there are by chance able to hold their course? Or truly another whose nature of the mind and of reason is able to hold lacking these? Not only that which they were made by the

¹⁰¹ *ut moleste ferrem tantum ingenium (bona venia me audies) in tam leves, ne dicam in tam ineptas sententias incidisse.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁰³ *Quae primum nullae sunt. Nihil est enim... quod vacet corpore; corporibus autem omnis obsidetur locus; ita nullum inane, nihil esse individuum potest.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁰⁶ *Interea, Vellei, noli quaeso prae te ferre vos plane expertes esse doctrinae.*

¹⁰⁷ *quae verens Epicurus monogrammos deos et nihil agentes commentus est.*

reason they lacked but they were to have known such they are not able without the greatest reason. (*DND* 2.115).¹⁰⁸

Following this insult aimed at Epicureans, Balbus continues his discourse before finally handing the reins of the discussion over to Cotta. Cotta begins his discourse in Book Three where he left off in Book One, “Because your Epicurus seems to me to fight not greatly about the immortal gods: by such method he does not dare to deny the gods true existency to be nor who would submit to spite or of crime.” (*DND* 3.3).¹⁰⁹ At this point, Cotta argues against both viewpoints from the Skeptic viewpoint with more emphasis on arguing against the Stoics since he has already argued against the Epicureans. Cotta argues through the book that one cannot know what the nature of the gods truly is. Cicero ends this work with the thoughts of the four members of this discussion with Velleius persuaded by Cotta and Cicero himself feeling as though Balbus was more correct.¹¹⁰

Following this work is *De fato*, one of Cicero’s shorter works in which he is at his villa with Hirtius, a friend. On this occasion, Hirtius asked Cicero for a discourse on fate. In a lost portion of the work, Hirtius has given his claim and points, and Cicero has begun to argue against these points.¹¹¹ Cicero constructs a portion of his argument around the idea that “this alone is able to be what either is true or will be true” (*Fat.* 17)¹¹² as claimed by Diodorus in his Περὶ Δυνατῶν. Now should this claim be true, then “nor the reason why Epicurus dreads fate and seeks protection from the atom and leads out this way and at one time he acknowledged two unexplainable things...” (*Fat* 18).¹¹³ Cicero continues this line of thought by saying that Epicurus only invented the swerve to allow for free will, and that without

¹⁰⁸ *Haec omnis discriptio siderum atque hic tantus caeli ornatus ex corporibus huc et illuc casu et temere cursantibus potuisse effici cuiquam sano videri potest? an vero alia quae natura mentis et rationis experts haec efficere potuit? quae modo ut fierent ratione egerunt sed intellegi qualia sint sine summa ratione nun possunt.*

¹⁰⁹ *Quia mihi videtur Epicurus vester de dis immortalibus non magnopere pugnare: tantum modo negare deos esse non audet ne quid invidiae subeat aut criminis.*

¹¹⁰ Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 382.

¹¹¹ Cicero, *De fato*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 196.

¹¹² *id solum fieri posse quod aut verum sit aut verum futurum sit*

¹¹³ *nec... est causa cur Epicurus fatum extimescat et ab atomis petat praesidium easque via deducat, et uno tempore suscipiat res duas inenodabiles...*

this swerve, Epicurus was afraid of a lack of freedom. However, Democritus, the ‘discoverer’ of the atom, was content and happy to let atoms continue on their natural course and not try to create an unnatural motion.¹¹⁴ Cicero finished this work by discussing the veracity of seemingly contrary statements and discussing what is essentially the middle position of Aristotle. Once again, in this work, Cicero works to argue against Epicureanism as it pertains to the topic of this work.

The final work of Cicero’s life is *De officiis*. This work was meant as a lesson to Cicero’s son, Marcus, about how to perform the duties one faces in life, whether in politics or family. In the beginning of his discourse in Book One on Moral Goodness, Cicero finally subscribes to one school in his own words: “but however our reading does not dissent from the Peripatetics, now that we wish to be both Socratic and Platonic...” (*Off.* 1.2).¹¹⁵ Following his *exordium* to his son to read and think carefully over what he himself has written, Cicero begins his discourse with the only complaint against Epicureans in this book, “and brave surely he cannot possibly be that counts pain the supreme evil, nor temperate he that holds pleasure to be the supreme good.” (*Off.* 1.5).¹¹⁶ The rest of Book One is spent discussing how to be Morally Good according to the Peripatetics and the Stoics and the New Academy.

In Book Two, Cicero discusses why it is necessary to be Expedient (or useful or necessary: *utile*) in what one does and how to do so. The second mention of Epicureanism in this work and the only one in this book shows Cicero’s disapproval of the ‘philosophy’: “not having given myself to pleasures unbecoming to a learned man” (*Off.* 2.2).¹¹⁷ But what if the Morally Good option and the *utile* option are two very different things? What, if to be *utile*, one is Morally Bad? What if the Morally Good thing is not *utile*? Cicero points out that the Stoics claim that what is Morally Good is *utile* and what is

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹¹⁵ *sed tamen nostra legens non multum a Peripateticis dissidentia, quoniam utriusque Socratici et Platonici volumus esse...*

¹¹⁶ *fortis vero dolorem summum malum iudicans aut temperans voluptatem summum bonum statuens esse certe nullo modo potest.*

¹¹⁷ *nec rursus indignis homine docto voluptatibus.*

not Morally Good is *inutile*.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, the New Academy allows Cicero to argue whatever he wishes, since, according to the New Academy, we have no method of knowing the answer as it is.¹¹⁹ Following a turn in his discourse upon the justification of tyrannicide and why one should live alone and without attachments, he once again comments upon the Epicureans as he quickly mentions their theology as it pertains to taking oaths.¹²⁰ As he begins to move into his closing thoughts for this work, Cicero exhorts his son that since “Now that these schools are out of date, Epicurus has come into vogue— an advocate and supporter of practically the same doctrine. Against such a philosophy we must fight “with horse and foot,” as the saying is, if our purpose is to defend and maintain our standard of moral rectitude.” (*Off.* 3.116).¹²¹ Cicero then proceeds to explain that Epicureanism must be fought because pleasure is not conducive to the Moral Goodness and the *utile* necessary to properly carry out duties. In other words, Cicero is vehemently and openly calling for his son and his friends to oppose Epicureanism. This becomes clearer when Cicero returns to the theme of passive injustice and develops the argument he began in the *De re publica*.

In the *De re publica*, Cicero argued against Epicurean passive injustice and his position should be understood as opposing Lucretius’ famous use of ship imagery to illustrate the Epicurean view. Lucretius suggested that awards in the afterlife await the person who pursued a life of active virtue:

(It is) sweet, when calm waters on the great sea have been agitated by the winds
 To see the great trouble of another man from land,
 Not because anyone’s suffering (is) agreeable pleasure,
 But because to see what ill you are free from yourself is pleasant;
 (it is) sweet even to see great contests of war
 Inserted in the fields without the part of danger,

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 278, 280.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 288.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 378.

¹²¹ *Quibus obsoletis floret Epicurus, eiusdem fere adiutor auctorque sententiae. Cum his “viris equisque” ut dicitur, si honestatem tueri ac retinere sententia est, decertandum est.*

But nothing is sweeter than to hold the well defended
 Lofty serene plateaus by the teachings of wise men,
 From where you can look down upon others and see (them) scattered,
 Wandering about, and seeking the path of life,
 To strive by genius, to contend for nobility,
 Night and day to be raised by exceeding labors
 Mounting up to the greatest riches pursuing power. (*DRN* 2.1-13)¹²²

This fits well with Cicero's ship metaphor in *De re publica*. It also fits well with Cicero's view on passive injustice in his *De officiis*. While in the passage of Lucretius above, the viewer stands on the shore and watches his fellow man be struck by misfortune, Cicero views two kinds of injustice- one is the injustice done by the one who actively does harm to another person, the other is injustice done by one who is able to shield and defend those weaker than himself, but chooses not to.¹²³ Of the two kinds of injustice, Cicero is clear about which is worse: "but he who does not prevent wrong, if he can, is just as guilty of wrong as if he deserted his parents or his friends or his country." (*Off.* 1.23)¹²⁴ If one capable of stopping injustice does nothing, he is guilty of being unfaithful to the point of treason and treachery. But why would one commit such a heinous crime? Cicero provides four options:

¹²² Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,
 E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem,
 Non quia vexare quemquamst iucunda voluptas
 Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est;
 Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri
 Per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli,
 Sed nihil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere
 Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,
 Despicere unde queas alios passimque videre
 Errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae,
 Certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
 Noctes atque dies niti praestante labore
 Ad summas emergere opes rerumque potiri.

¹²³ *Off.* 1.23

¹²⁴ *Qui autem non defendit nec obsistit, si potest, iniuriae, tam est in vitio, quam si parentes aut amicos aut patriam deserat.*

People either are reluctant to incur enmity or trouble or expense; or through indifference, indolence, or incompetence, or through some preoccupation or self-interest they are so absorbed that they suffer those to be neglected whom it is their duty to protect. (*Off.* 1.28)¹²⁵

Essentially, this passive injustice is caused by some form of selfishness that can only be changed by compulsion, yet an action is only just and right if it is voluntary.¹²⁶ On the other side of this issue is active justice. This discussion goes back to Cicero's *De natura deorum*. While Cicero was discussing the gods with members of the other prevalent schools of philosophy, Cotta delivered a monologue in response to the Epicurean idea of the gods. Cotta attacks the teachings of Epicurus himself "Thus the first of his selected aphorisms or maxims, which you call the *Kyriai Doxai*, runs, I believe, thus: *That which is blessed and immortal neither experiences trouble nor causes it to anyone.*"¹²⁷ Here, Cicero recognizes the Epicurean belief that the gods exist; however, they are so entangled in their own pleasure and happiness that they do not have the time or ability to care about men or their doings. This statement does not make sense to Cicero or Cotta who then considers thus:

Now let us consider divine happiness. Happiness is admittedly impossible without virtue. But virtue is in its nature active, and your god is entirely inactive. Therefore, he is devoid of virtue. Therefore, he is not happy either. In what then does his life consist? 'In a constant succession of things good,' you reply, 'without any admixture of evils.' (DND 1.110)¹²⁸

In Cotta's view, the Epicureans here are completely inactive and, thus, due to the definitions of virtue and justice, are neither virtuous nor happy. These inactive gods do not fit the final tenant that Cicero provides- "that which is adapted to promote and strengthen society." (*Off.* 1.100)¹²⁹ Such gods do nothing for society whatsoever, they barely do anything to promote and strengthen themselves.

¹²⁵ *Nam aut inimicitias aut laborem aut sumptus suscipere nolunt aut etiam neglegentia, pigritia, inertiae aut suis studiis quibusdam occupationibusve sic impediuntur, ut eos, quos tutari debeant, desertos esse patiantur.*

¹²⁶ *Off.* 1.28

¹²⁷ *Itaque in illis selectis eius brevibusque sententiis, quas appellatis κυριας δόξας, haec ut opinor prima sententia est: 'Quod beatum et immortale est, id nec habet nec exhibet cuiquam negotium.'* DND 1.85.

¹²⁸ *Videamus nunc de beato. Sine virtute certe nullo modo; virtus autem actiosa, et deus vester nihil agens; expers virtutis igitur; ita ne beatus quidem. Quae ergo vita? 'Suppeditatio' inquis 'bonorum nullo malorum interventu.'*

¹²⁹ *Et id, quod ad hominum consociationem accommodatum.*

Cicero, through the *Somnium Scipionis* and later philosophical works, argued against Epicureanism passionately until the end. It is through this argument against Epicureanism, particularly against Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, that the *Somnium* connects with the rest of *De re publica* and even then most strongly with the *exordium* in Book One, providing a ring structure composition in *De re publica* and setting up an overarching theme of anti-Epicureanism that continues throughout the rest of Cicero's works.

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¹³⁰ There is a new work out on this topic. It came out too late for me to be able to utilize for the purposes of this thesis.