

*Cicero's Rhetoric of Anti-Epicureanism:
Anonymity as Critique*

Daniel P. Hanchey

It is perhaps unfair to the Epicureans that one of the richest – or, at least, one of the best-preserved – sources for Epicurean thought is also one of its most vocal critics. But fair or not, over the course of the last decade of his life, Cicero made the Epicureans a regular feature of the philosophical and ethical dialogues that constituted much of his public voice at the time. Cicero's critiques of Epicureanism are further augmented by the fact that for him – orator, statesman, philosopher – the Epicureans are consistent antagonists across several spheres of his own activity and thought. For example, not only does Cicero take issue as a philosopher with the Epicurean *finis* of pleasure, but, as a statesman, he also disagrees with the Epicurean aversion to (or at least reticence regarding) political involvement.¹ And as an orator, Cicero claimed no benefit could be derived from the Epicureans, who, he seems to have believed, rejected παιδεία and had little need for a skill so entwined with public deliberation.²

In truth, for Cicero these spheres of thought were not distinct. The Scipio of *On the Republic* claims at the end of Book 6 that the highest virtue involves service to the state (*Rep.* 6.29). Crassus makes clear throughout *On the Orator* that genuine oratory is likewise ingrained in public service (e.g., 3.76). And in Cicero's first book of *Tusculan Disputations* the lead interlocutor presents an argument for an immortal soul that closely recalls the activity of the orator.³ Each of the three

¹ Fish: 2011 and others have gone a long way to debunking the idea that Epicureans, especially Roman Epicureans, rejected political involvement unilaterally. This chapter, though, will as a general rule describe Epicureanism from a Ciceronian perspective. For Cicero's critique of the Epicurean aversion to politics, see the chapters of Roskam (2) and Gilbert (4) in this volume.

² Cicero at *Orat.* 3.63 discounts the value of Epicurean thought for the orator. On the Epicureans and παιδεία, see Chandler: 2017, 1–17.

³ This argument especially occupies the central part of the first *Tusculan*, from 1.50 to 1.67. A fuller consideration of the way Cicero makes this connection can be found at Hanchey: 2013a.

spheres to which Cicero most fully devotes himself – oratory, politics, philosophy – informs and depends on the others. The union of these three spheres is part of what Robert Hariman calls “Cicero’s republican style.”⁴ Cicero spent much of his life and career trying to articulate, validate and perform this “style,” this unified approach to public living and private morality.

It just so happened that the Epicureans were at odds with him in each facet of his program. For the Epicureans, these spheres of activity were not a program per se; the overlap between them did not play for them the privileged role it did for Cicero. Cicero was developing a socio-political system, whereas the Epicureans were developing a philosophical one. As a result, not only did Cicero feel the need to criticize the individual tenets of Epicureanism, but he did so from a very specific paradigm and according to a specific set of rules. Cicero and the Epicureans were not playing on the same field, so to speak; this, however, never stopped Cicero from criticizing Epicureans as if they were supposed to be on his field and playing his game.

Finally, to compound the whole picture of Cicero’s anti-Epicureanism, even as he strove to establish and fortify his brand of republicanism, he faced the ever-growing inevitability of its defeat at the hands of Julius Caesar. Caesar posed a threat to Cicero’s real Republic and his theoretical one, with the result that Cicero’s criticism of the Epicureans was further fueled by existential angst over his whole project. If indeed Caesar had Epicurean sympathies, encouraged by his father-in-law or otherwise, it can only have added to Cicero’s antipathy.⁵

Taken together, these factors produce a tangled web of criticism that stretches throughout Cicero’s theoretical works. But perhaps because of

⁴ Hariman: 1995, 95–140. Cappello: 2019 explores the effects of this “style” within Cicero’s *Academica*, where he identifies Cicero’s skeptical philosophical method with a community-oriented approach to philosophy. A Republic implicitly provides the right mood and backdrop for philosophical inquiry. Gurd: 2007 does something similar in considering how many of Cicero’s letters depict his deep interest in collaboration as part of his compositional practice. Again, the back-and-forth of republican community finds its parallel in Cicero’s practice of writing.

⁵ For competing views on the extent of Caesar’s Epicureanism, see Bourne: 1977, who argues for its influence in much of Caesar’s behavior, and Mulgan: 1979, who is less convinced. Belliotti: 2009 marshals the evidence and reasonably concludes that it is a stretch to identify Caesar as an “Epicurean *as such*” given the limited evidence (109, emphasis in original). But he also admits that many of his ideas, particularly on religion and death, mirrored those of the Epicureans and may have borne their influence (107–109). And now Valachova: 2018 reaches a similar conclusion to that of Belliotti. See also Volk’s chapter (5) in this volume for the possibility of Caesar’s Epicureanism.

Cicero's opposition to Epicureanism on such a fundamental level, he can extend his criticism of the sect into any topic or area that he feels threatens his general republican perspective.⁶ In this chapter I will focus not so much on the explicit doctrinal criticisms that Cicero levels at the Epicureans in, for example, *On Ends* 2 or *On the Nature of the Gods*,⁷ but on one facet of his rhetorical criticism throughout his theoretical writings, viz., his tendency to avoid explicitly naming the Epicureans, a technique whose consistent reappearance indicates its significance for his overall project, style and literary technique.⁸

Circumlocution

When in the course of the discussions dramatized in Cicero's dialogues an interlocutor wishes to invoke the Epicureans, he will occasionally do so by invoking the founder himself by name.⁹ At other times Cicero uses the adjectival form *Epicureus*, either in reference to specific adherents of the school or to Epicureans as a collective. He uses it in both of these ways most often in discussions where Epicurean thought specifically is under thorough review, especially in *On Ends* and *On the Nature of the*

⁶ The bibliography on Cicero's anti-Epicureanism is copious. See Griffin: 1989, Nicgorski: 2002, Stokes: 1995, Striker: 1996 and especially Lévy: 1992, who emphasizes Epicureanism's threat to the *mos maiorum*. Zetzel: 1998 considers *On the Republic* and Lucretius; Maslowski: 1974 concentrates on the speeches. Cicero's specific distaste for the pleasure calculus appears in *Against Piso* (*passim*), *For Sestius* (23, 138–39) and *For Caelius* (39–42). Inwood: 1990 focuses on Cicero's criticisms in *On Ends* 2, which are his most concentrated and pointed rebukes. He concludes that Cicero's arguments aim primarily “to air the issues raised by Epicurean hedonism . . . and to kill its influence at Rome . . . by showing that it was not in fact compatible with the traditional *Roman* attachment to *prima facie* moral virtue” (163, emphasis in original). Cf. Annas and Betegh: 2016. Benferhat: 2001 explores Cicero's anti-Epicureanism in the *Tusculan Disputations*.

⁷ On Cicero's representation and critique of the Epicureans in *On Ends*, three chapters dedicated to the subject in the volume edited by Julia Annas and Gabor Betegh (2016) are well worth reading. Warren (ch. 2), Morel (ch. 3) and Frede (ch. 4) explore Cicero's cases against Epicurean understandings of pleasure, virtue and friendship, respectively.

⁸ Charles Brittain: 2016 provides an example of what I mean by Cicero's literary technique. He cannily observes that the conversations depicted in *On Ends* appear in reverse chronological order (according to dramatic date). Thus, according to the conceit of the dialogue, the Cicero of Book 2 has already heard, and rejected, the arguments advanced in Books 5 and 3, respectively. As Brittain shows, this timeline calls into question interpretations of the dialogue that suggest Cicero is slowly advancing closer to the truth through his discussions. The literariness of the dialogues plays an invaluable role in shaping his arguments.

⁹ E.g., *Fat.* 18 or *Div.* 1.61, but there are numerous examples of this kind of reference, not only to Epicureanism, but to many different schools of thought. Democritus (e.g., *Acad.* 1.7) and Metrodorus (e.g., *Fin.* 1.25) also occasionally appear paired with Epicurus as representatives of elements of Epicurean thought (as well as Philodemus and Zeno in *On Ends*).

Gods, and *passim* throughout *On Fate*, the *Tusculan Disputations* and the *Academics*.¹⁰

But at other times, both in these works and others where Epicurean doctrines, though not the focus, still come under some consideration, the interlocutor regularly invokes the Epicureans obliquely, using a periphrasis that identifies them as “those who refer all things to pleasure” or the like.¹¹ Cicero uses a formulation of this sort at least twenty times in his theoretical works. At least a dozen of these formulations occur across five works where the Epicureans go unnamed in the passage or the larger context.¹² So, for example, in *On Friendship* Laelius offers the following judgment (32):

Ab his qui pecudum ritu **ad voluptatem omnia referunt** longe dissentiunt, nec mirum; nihil enim altum, nihil magnificum ac divinum suspicere possunt qui suas omnes cogitationes abiecerunt in rem tam humilem tamque contemptam.

Those people who, in the manner of beasts, refer all things to the standard of pleasure, differ greatly from these men I’ve just named [i.e. friends who esteem love over profit]. And it’s not surprising. For those who have cast all their thoughts upon a thing so base and so contemptible cannot observe anything exalted, estimable and divine.

There are several possible explanations for Cicero’s circumlocution in passages like this, and Jonathan Powell details two of the most plausible in his commentary on *On Friendship*. Laelius’ discourse on friendship, as he indicates, is that of a self-declared amateur. Of course, all Ciceronian interlocutors are amateurs in a certain sense, for he intentionally populates his dialogues with Roman aristocrats in lieu of philosophers in the Greek tradition.¹³ Some of these speakers are still experts in their subject matter, as with Crassus in *On the Orator* or Scipio in *On the Republic*. Others are not experts but still speak and conduct themselves as if they have expertise, even if that expertise is historically implausible (e.g., Balbus in *On the Nature of the Gods* or Lucullus in the *Prior Academics*). But Laelius

¹⁰ He mentions the “Epicureans” as such eleven times in *On Ends*, thirteen in *On the Nature of the Gods*. Forms of *Epicureus* occur two or three times each in *Acad.*, *Div.*, *Fat.* and *Tusc.*, but rarely ever outside of these works.

¹¹ E.g., *Amic.* 32, quoted below, *Orat.* 1.226, *Fin.* 2.58, *Sen.* 43, *Off.* 3.118. This and other formulations are considered in more depth below.

¹² *Orat.* 1.226, 3.62, 3.63; *Sen.* 43; *Leg.* 1.39, 1.41, 1.42, 1.49; *Amic.* 32, 86; *Off.* 1.5, 3.12.

¹³ Cicero’s letters offer unique insight into his mindset in choosing his interlocutors. See, e.g., *QFr.* 3.5, *Fam.* 9.8, *Att.* 13.12 and 4.16. Such letters suggest he is concerned not only with the social status of figures from the past, but that contemporary political pressure and his own friendships affect whom he chooses as speakers.

forswears such expertise explicitly first at *On Friendship* 17, where he rejects the Greek rhetoricians and the *schola*, then again at *On Friendship* 24, where he avoids the company of those *qui ista disputant*.¹⁴

Powell suggests first that Laelius' aversion to identifying the Epicureans by name extends in part from his resistance to being identified as a philosopher of the Greek sort, whose knowledge of philosophy is too specific and subtle.¹⁵ To buttress this case, Powell also notes that Laelius avoids naming any philosophical school at all in the dialogue.¹⁶ As a second possible explanation for the anonymity of the Epicureans, Powell proposes that Cicero himself wishes to avoid giving offense to Atticus, the dedicatee of the dialogue and the companion who was himself an Epicurean and whose friendship had in some way inspired the work.¹⁷

This second argument is plausible but seems insufficient to explain Cicero's pattern of describing the Epicureans while leaving them unnamed, since by 44 BC Atticus was certainly well-acquainted with Cicero's attacks on Epicureanism.¹⁸ The first argument, however (about Laelius avoiding Greekness), bears consideration. On the one hand, Cicero's Laelius undoubtedly wished to avoid appearing Greek, but it is also worth noting that Laelius' main objection is to Greek-style display centered on the rhetorical method, the fielding of any sort of question and the formulation of a clever argument in response. Crassus objects to the same kind of scenario in a mirror-passage in *On the Orator* 1 (98–110), and Cicero, in the process of reassuring Torquatus about his intentions, is critical of this rhetorical method in his opening words in *On Ends* 2.

Posing objections to Greek disputation or to the inviting of questions does not necessarily entail avoiding mention of Epicureanism. Cicero seems generally and consistently opposed to both things, but his criticisms of the two modes tend to be different. In the opening paragraphs of *On Ends* 2, Torquatus and Cicero have to work toward a compromise regarding modes of philosophical discourse. Cicero, without Torquatus' objection, wants to avoid the *schola* (2.1–4), but Torquatus ultimately grows impatient with the dialectical approach Cicero offers in its place (2.17–18).

¹⁴ The *schola* form and the verb *disputare* are repeatedly rejected by Ciceronian interlocutors. For a discussion of these terms and how they are used in Cicero, see Gildenhard: 2007, 7–21 and Gorman: 2005, 65–67.

¹⁵ Powell: 1990, 16. ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20. Gilbert's chapter (4) in this volume explores Atticus' Epicureanism in more detail.

¹⁸ Cicero in fact associated with and respected many Epicureans, including Atticus, Cassius and Torquatus. Powell's argument that Cicero wanted to avoid causing offense to these is entirely plausible. In a sense, the emphasis on certain Epicurean traits allows Cicero to distance the people he is talking about from the Epicureans he admired.

In the end, Cicero returns to a rhetorical mode after having made his aversion to the *schola* clear. This compromise is one of several literary tools for suggesting that, far from being the kind of Greek philosophers that traffic in displays of cleverness, the Epicureans in fact lack subtlety and erudition (cf. 2.12–13: *bonos . . . sed certe non pereruditos*). They are not, like Greek sophists, misleading the audience; they are, as the compromise of *On Ends* 2 suggests, misleading themselves by failing to understand fully what they are saying.¹⁹

Likewise, in *On the Orator* Crassus fully wants to avoid associations with the likes of the sophist Gorgias, but he promotes philosophical inquiry. Rejecting the Greekness of the *schola* does not mean rejecting philosophy or even the knowledge of philosophy. In fact, in Book 3 he mentions a number of philosophers and philosophical schools by name several times, including the Stoics,²⁰ but he does not name the Epicureans. Instead he resorts to the periphrastic formula, calling the Epicureans at *On the Orator* 3.63 *hi qui nunc voluptate omnia metiuntur* (“these who now measure all things on the scale of pleasure”). Then, a paragraph later, he speaks at 3.63 of *ea philosophia, quae suscepit patrocinium voluptatis* (“that philosophy that has taken up the patronage of pleasure”). This circumlocution seems to be a different sort of rhetorical move than the critique levelled at Greek scholastic philosophy at *On the Orator* 1.105, where Crassus explicitly associates such philosophy with a Peripatetic named Staseas.

So, while Powell’s suggestions tell part of the story, Cicero must have a further reason for avoiding mention of the Epicureans by name. And the reason may not in fact be all that hard to determine: Cicero identified the Epicureans as he did to place the focus on, and to avoid any confusion over, what he considered to be true Epicureanism and why he considered it a true problem.

Epicurean Fundamentals

Like the other philosophical schools, Epicureanism had to negotiate a tension in its fidelity to the principles of its founder versus its role within evolving or shifting cultural contexts.²¹ This burden was particularly

¹⁹ Cicero’s arguments in *Fin.* 2 are designed to point out internal inconsistencies in Epicurean doctrines about pleasure. Cf. Morel: 2016.

²⁰ See esp. *Orat.* 3.59–68. Cf. Scaevola’s initial skepticism about the union of philosophy and oratory at *Orat.* 1.41–44, where he lists a number of schools.

²¹ Certainly this is true for Epicureanism at Rome. Chandler: 2017, 8–9 considers this tension in the context of παιδεία. And Philodemus, who borrows vocabulary from the Stoics, says outright in *On*

pronounced for the Epicureans, who had great reverence for Epicurus himself. Cicero mentions this reverence in the *Tusculan Disputations* (I.48):

soleo saepe mirari non nullorum insolentiam philosophorum, qui naturae cognitionem admirantur eiusque inventori et principi gratias exsultantes agunt eumque venerantur ut deum.

It is my usual tendency to marvel at the unusualness of many philosophers who themselves marvel at the study of nature, and leap to give thanks to its inventor and originator, and worship him like a god.

Philip Hardie suggests that in his reference to *non nulli philosophi* Cicero has in mind Lucretius in particular, but regardless of the specific identification, Cicero's *philosophi* are undoubtedly the Epicureans and the *inventor* is Epicurus himself.²²

Here, too, Cicero avoids specific mention of Epicurus' name, and in doing so he highlights a contrast. On the one hand, many Epicureans go so far as to worship Epicurus; on the other hand, in doing so they reveal the height of their foolishness. In *Tusculan Disputations* 1 they worship Epicurus for freeing them from the fear of the mythological terrors of the underworld. But since that fear is unfounded and silly to begin with, the Epicureans effectively worship Epicurus for an unfounded and silly reason. When he avoids naming them Cicero accomplishes two rhetorical effects. First, he slights them, treating them as if they are not worth naming. And secondly, he suggests that their fundamental principles, as advanced by Epicurus, are so manifestly wrong that simply by identifying what he understands those principles to be he is making a rhetorical argument against them. Giving them a name would give them credit. Withholding the name discredits them, and identifying them by one of their beliefs brings that belief under scrutiny.

Cicero is also insisting that any Romanized versions of Epicureanism are not fully genuine. Epicureanism in Rome had advanced and evolved to meet new and different cultural and moral contingencies, but Cicero uses his periphrases to orient his reader to what he considers Epicurus' core ideas. In the response to Torquatus in *On Ends* 2, Cicero the interlocutor introduces a scenario where a man dying intestate asks his friend to ensure his estate passes to his daughter. Cicero assumes Torquatus, as the friend in

Property Management that Epicureans have no problem receiving what is good and true from other schools into their own tradition.

²² Hardie: 2007, 113; Cf. Pucci: 1966, 93–95. Roskam's chapter (2) in this volume analyzes the Epicureanism of Torquatus.

such a situation, would oblige the dying man. But he would do so in spite of, not because of, his Epicureanism (2.58):

sed ego ex te quaero, quoniam idem tu certe fecisses, nonne intellegas eo maiorem vim esse naturae, quod ipsi vos, qui omnia ad vestrum commodum et, ut ipsi dicitis, ad voluptatem referatis, tamen ea faciatis, e quibus appareat non voluptatem vos, sed officium sequi. . . ?

But I ask you, since you would no doubt have done the same thing, don't you realize that the force of nature is so great that you, you who refer all things to your convenience and pleasure, as you put it, even you would do these things that make it clear that you are pursuing not pleasure, but duty. . . ?

Here again Cicero uses the circumlocution (*vos, qui omnia ad vestrum commodum et . . . ad voluptatem referatis*) to point out what he considers one of the fundamental principles of Epicureanism and to express his belief that this core quality of Epicureanism, understood in the most straightforward way, is manifestly foolish even to Torquatus. Despite the best efforts of figures like Torquatus to Romanize Epicureanism, Cicero consistently tries to make clear that, to him, Epicureanism is ultimately defined by certain baseline qualities. At the most fundamental level, by avoiding the name of the Epicureans so often and by replacing the name with circumlocutions, Cicero concentrates on highlighting and marginalizing these basic Epicurean qualities.

And for Cicero, there are three basic qualities to which he returns, corresponding roughly with elements of Epicurean physics, logic and ethics: the mortality of the soul, an animal-like failure to employ *ratio* and *oratio* and a penchant for quantifying ethical decisions.

Soul Mortality

Following Democritus, the Epicureans famously held the soul to be a physical, mortal substance that dissolved with the rest of the body at death.²³ When Cicero needles Lucretius and the *non nulli philosophi* (in *Tusc.* 1.48, quoted above), it is because he (or his interlocutor) strongly doubts that Epicurean arguments about death come close to the mark. In two other places, *On Friendship* 13 and *On Old Age* 85, Cicero's interlocutors scoff mildly at philosophers who deny soul immortality.

The Epicureans, of course, were not the only philosophers to claim that the soul was mortal. Cicero admits as much at *Tusculan Disputations* 1.77,

²³ Cf. *Lucr.* 3.830–869.

where he mentions Dicaearchus as an example of one disbelieving in the immortal soul. But Cicero's characteristically condescending tone in both *On Friendship* 13 and *On Old Age* 85 suggests that the Epicureans are the primary group he has in mind. At *On Old Age* 85, he refers to them as *minuti philosophi*; then in *On Friendship* 13, in the voice of Laelius, he describes philosophers who have "recently" (*nuper*) come on the scene – a sort of rhetorical deauthorization of their ideas. In all three passages (*Tusc.* 1.48, *Sen.* 85 and *Amic.* 13) Cicero avoids naming the Epicureans while mocking their ideas. The references are rhetorically dismissive of soul mortality. But though he scoffs, generally this core belief of the Epicureans is the one least emphasized by Cicero, perhaps because, even to Cicero, there is no *prima facie* evidence that a belief in a mortal soul is absurd, or perhaps because the belief was shared by non-Epicureans.

Likeness to Animals

The second core characteristic he presents relates in a way to logic: Cicero regularly connects the Epicureans to beasts or animals. In *On Duties* 1.11, Cicero offers a Stoic-influenced understanding of how humans and animals differ.²⁴ He argues that both animals and humans have instincts for self-preservation and procreation, but animals lack the human capacities for *ratio* and *oratio*, i.e., for reason, which allows humans to think logically and to process the relationship between past, present and future, and for speech, which allows humans to form communities.

These two complementary ideas form the bedrock of Cicero's work and thought. The dialogue form he so often uses embodies both reason and speech, and the fact that Cicero outlines the joint significance of *ratio* and *oratio* for humans first in the opening paragraphs of his first theoretical work (*Inv.* 1–2) and then returns to it in his final work (*Off.* 1.11) serves as another testimony to the fundamental role the paired ideas play in the theoretical works as a whole.²⁵

And yet, these two capacities for reason and speech are precisely the two capacities that animals lack. As a result, when Cicero compares Epicureans to animals, he is doing more than offering a simple slight. He is instead pointing to a fundamental flaw in their philosophy, one that discredits anything else they might say. They can neither synthesize ideas nor operate effectively in communities.

²⁴ Cf. *Inv.* 1–2, *Fin.* 2.45 and *Leg.* 1.30.

²⁵ These ideas are more fully explored in Hanchey: 2014.

Cicero associates Epicureans with animals regularly. Twice in *On Friendship* (20, 32) Laelius makes brief, summary critiques of the Epicureans, saying first that seeking out pleasure in place of all other things is “the goal of beasts” (*beluarum extremum*; 20) and later that Epicureans refer all things to pleasure “in the manner of cattle” (*pecudum ritu*; 32). In *Academics* 1.6 and *On Ends* 2.109, where Epicureans are explicitly named, Cicero reaffirms that pleasure is the chief end for beasts and that Epicureans share this quality with them. And in *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.122, Cicero implies that Epicureans value and treat their friends as if they were *pecudes*. All of these comparisons are meant to reinforce the parallel critiques that Epicureans are irrational (fail to employ *ratio*), are self-interested (fail to pursue community through *oratio*) and are pleasure-seekers.²⁶

Emphasis on Measuring and Quantification

But by far the most common circumlocution, and hence the one that most closely and completely identifies the Epicureans for Cicero, is a two-part formula exemplified succinctly at *On the Orator* 3.62: *hi qui nunc voluptate omnia metiuntur*.²⁷ With this pattern Cicero takes aim at what he considers the Epicureans’ most fundamental flaw: their ethics. The first and most obvious part of the formula is the reference to pleasure, and Cicero considered the Epicureans hedonists fundamentally. But equally significant for the formula is the verb *metiuntur*. The Epicureans make two mistakes: They use pleasure as the standard and they make decisions through a process of measuring.²⁸

Cicero returns to this formula over and over again, with slight variations. The Epicureans regularly weigh or measure things in accordance with pleasure (or pleasure and pain) in order to make decisions.²⁹ Very often Cicero says specifically that the Epicureans (unnamed, except in

²⁶ Cicero is in part able to make the comparison between animals and Epicureans because of Epicurus’ own words. In DL 10.137, Epicurus points to the natural impulse of pigs and babies towards pleasure. The comparison to animals and babies is not meant to inspire Epicureans to imitate them, but to justify the innate quality of the desire for pleasure. Cf. Lucretius 5.932–959. See also Warren: 2002, ch. 5, on the Epicurean origin of the pig comparison, and, of course, cf. Horace *Ep.* 1.4.16.

²⁷ Leeman, Pinkster and Wisse: 1996, *ad loc.*, note that Cicero used a similar formula in the contemporary speech *Against Piso*, which serves as a reminder both of the breadth of Cicero’s characterization of the Epicureans and of the invective potential of the formula. The *nunc* here also recalls the dismissive *nuper* at *Amic.* 13.

²⁸ Parts of the discussion that follows were first articulated in Hanchey: 2013b.

²⁹ See *Orat.* 3.62, *Leg.* 1.39, *Fin.* 2.56, *Fin.* 5.93, *Sen.* 45 and *Off.* 3.12.

On Ends) “refer things to pleasure” (e.g., *omnia, quae faceremus, ad voluptatem esse referenda; Sen. 43*).³⁰ The valence of the verb *referre* retains the sense of measuring, the idea that pleasure is a standard or calculus by which to make a judgment. In some cases the Epicureans “refer” or “measure,” but do so to or by standards apart from or in addition to pleasure. So, in *On Laws* 1.41 the Epicureans measure on a calculus of “convenience” (*commodus; metietur suis commodis omnia*), as they do at *On Duties* 1.5 and 3.12, while at *On Ends* 2.58 they refer all things *ad vestrum commodum*. At various times they measure by or refer to “benefit” (*emolumentum*), “utility” (*utilitas*), “reward” (*praemium*), “profit” (*merces*) and the “stomach” (*venter*).³¹

As variations in the formula clarify, the pleasure/measure pairing has a broader application. Pleasure functions as the most common stand-in for selfishness, while measuring encompasses a decision-making process that values nothing but self-interest as inherently worthy *per se*.³² That is to say, measuring denies or limits the capacity of nature to endow certain concepts with inherent value. Value is instead assessed through a process of weighing or measuring.

Both selfishness and measuring ultimately have the same fault: They undercut the function of the Republic. The threat posed to the Republic by selfishness is clear.³³ The threat of measuring is perhaps not as clear, but what is clear is that Cicero, with the rarest of exceptions, uses the rhetoric of measuring in social and ethical decision-making contexts negatively.

The examples related to Epicureans constitute the vast majority of Cicero's appeals to measuring, but even when the Epicureans are not the specific target, measuring carries an unfavorable connotation. In *On the Orator* 1.7 and 2.335, Cicero mentions people who measure on a scale of utility, but in both cases they seem to be using the wrong process of decision-making because they arrive at the wrong conclusions.³⁴

³⁰ See also *Orat.* 1.226, *Fin.* 2.58, *Sen.* 43 and *Amic.* 32.

³¹ For *emolumentum*: *Fin.* 2.85 and *Off.* 3.12; for *utilitas*: *Leg.* 1.42 and *Off.* 3.118; for *praemium*: *Leg.* 1.49; for *merces*: *Fin.* 2.85; for *venter*: *Nat. D.* 1.113.

³² Cf. Morel: 2016, 78: “By subordinating morality to pleasure, Epicurean ethics starts out from an unacceptable principle and therefore leads, regardless of its doctrinal content, to disastrous consequences.”

³³ *Off.* 1.22 (*non nobis solum nati sumus*) perhaps most famously and succinctly summarizes Cicero's general position.

³⁴ *Orat.* 1.7: *Quis enim est qui, si clarorum hominum scientiam rerum gestarum vel utilitate vel magnitudine metiri velit, non anteponat oratori imperatorem?* (“Who in the world would not place a general before an orator, if his concern was to measure the knowledge of illustrious men by the usefulness or greatness of their accomplishments?”); 2.335: *quarum fructum utilitate metimur*, in a critique of utilitarianism.

The Epicureans are simply a subset of these individuals. Cicero describes the virtuous as measuring the highest good with *honestas* in *On Ends*, but the passage is focalized by Epicurus, who would, by Cicero's assessment, understand the conflict between virtue and pleasure in terms of measuring.³⁵ In *On Friendship* 21, it is actually the Stoics who measure, when they overvalue the *magnificentia verborum*, by speaking about preferred indifferents and tightly restricting the meaning of words like *bonus* and *sapiens*. A pair of examples come in the *Tusculans*, at 1.90 and 5.94: In both cases the interlocutor is responding to people who use the senses or the body as a standard of decision-making, and he then offers alternative, worthier standards (the health of the Republic in the first instance, traditional Roman social divisions in the other). These examples, though more haphazard than Cicero's association of measuring with the Epicureans, only reinforce the insufficiency of measuring as a tool for making social and ethical decisions.³⁶ The instrumental process of measuring requires the decision-maker to quantify ethical goods and to judge them in relation to other goods. Cicero occasionally uses such language when his interlocutor introduces it, or when another figure focalizes the words, but he avoids it when describing his preferred ethical decision-making processes.

Why, then, is Cicero so opposed to measuring? A passage from the first book of *On Laws* summarizes many of the different ways Cicero considers the use of measuring a threat to the Republic, beginning at 1.39. The interlocutor Cicero is making the case for natural law and the inherent value of virtue, an argument upon which the ideal laws of his ideal Republic will rest. He says:

Sibi autem indulgentes et corpori deservientes atque omnia quae sequantur in vita quaeque fugiant voluptatibus et doloribus ponderantes, etiam si vera dicant (nihil enim opus est hoc loco litibus), in hortulis suis iubeamus dicere, atque etiam ab omni societate rei publicae, cuius partem nec norunt ullam neque umquam nosse voluerunt, paulisper facessant rogemus.

And regarding those who indulge themselves and are slaves to their bodies, and measure on a scale of pleasure and pain all the things they should do or

³⁵ *Fin.* 2.48: *hanc se tuus Epicurus omnino ignorare dicit quam aut qualem esse velint qui honestate summum bonum metiantur* ("Yet your Epicurus tells us that he is utterly at a loss to know what nature or qualities are assigned to this morality by those who make it the measure of the chief good").

³⁶ The only other example I find comes at *Brutus* 257, where Cicero argues against using utility or profit as a means for weighing someone's worth (*quare non quantum quisque prosit, sed quanti quisque sit ponderandum est*). Cf. the examples from *Orat.* This passage in *Brut.* is charged with implicit criticism of Julius Caesar and commodity exchange. See Hanchey: 2015.

flee from in life; even if these should speak the truth—there is no need here to go into detail about it—let us beseech them to do their talking in their little gardens, and let us ask them to retire a little from the society of the Republic, about which they neither know anything nor want to know anything.

The cluster of elements from Cicero's formula makes the identification of the Epicureans secure, as does the reference to *hortuli*.³⁷ Here Cicero excludes the Epicureans from a discussion of the Republic by placing emphasis on their wont to “weigh on a scale of pleasure and pain” (*voluptatibus et doloribus ponderantes*). This characteristic is fundamentally what disqualifies them from commenting on the running of the Republic.

Just a few paragraphs later, despite his stated intention to avoid arguing against the Epicureans, Cicero repeats the same set of premises (*Leg.* 1.42). The discussion has moved on to the priority of universal law over the written laws of individual states. Cicero insists that without universal law, written laws have no ultimate, absolute authority to which to appeal, and may therefore be rejected in some instances. Specifically, Cicero speaks of the sort of individual (*idem*) who claims that everything is to be measured by “self-interest” (*utilitate*) and who will even break laws if he stands to profit. The same criticisms of selfishness resurface here, coupled with a reference to measuring (*metienda sunt*), all in the context of a rejection of nature. Here the threat of the Epicureans is even greater: Not only should they not participate in setting laws for the Republic, but their methodology poses a direct threat to the existing laws and their foundations.

In *On Laws* 1.49, Cicero again makes the association between Epicureans and utilitarian measuring: *Qui virtutem praemio metiuntur, nullam virtutem nisi malitiam putant* (“Those who measure virtue based on reward think there is no virtue but vice”). By prioritizing *praemium* the Epicureans devalue a whole set of virtues: *beneficentia*, *gratia*, *amicitia* and ultimately *societas*, *aequalitas* and *iustitia* (1.49–50). Such a self-interested calculus is most troubling to Cicero because it threatens the Republic, its laws and the very bonds of society.

In this way, measuring is closely connected to the parallel category of quantification and commerce. Like measuring, commerce is interested in relative value, and Cicero, on multiple occasions, connects the Epicureans

³⁷ Dyck: 2004, 172 *ad loc.*, offers two interpretations of Cicero's hesitation to name the Epicureans in this specific passage. He first names the rhetorical strategy of *tacito nomine*, i.e., the slighting of the opponent by leaving them unnamed. He also postulates, like Powell: 1990 in his *On Friendship* commentary, that Cicero is showing sensitivity to the feelings of Atticus, who is of course both present for the discussion and an Epicurean.

with the commercialization or commoditization of friendship. Three of the most striking examples come from dialogues that engage Epicureanism explicitly (*On Ends* and *On the Nature of the Gods*). In *On Ends* 2, Cicero twice rejects Torquatus' idea of Epicurean friendship by associating it with ideas of commerce. First, at 2.83, Cicero discusses the claim voiced by Torquatus (at *Fin.* 1.70) that the Epicureans enter into "pacts" (*foedera*) of friendship. He concludes:

An vero, si fructibus et emolumentis et utilitatibus amicitias colemus, si nulla caritas erit, quae faciat amicitiam ipsam sua sponte, vi sua, ex se et propter se expetendam, dubium est, quin fundos et insulas amicis anteponamus?

But if we cultivate friendships for their benefits and gains and utility, if there is no love, which produces friendship of its own accord, by its own force, sought from and for its own sake, can one doubt that we would prefer acquiring land and real estate to acquiring friends?

Foedus itself is not an explicitly commercial term. Torquatus had used it himself (1.70) to describe what he perceived as the elevated character of Epicurean friendship. Cicero here claims that, if the Epicureans can transcend their doctrine of self-seeking through contract, they might also attain to other non-Epicurean virtues through contracts.³⁸ In fact, though, Cicero mocks the Epicurean understanding of a *foedus*. Their contract is not designed to assure fairness to all parties, but to ensure the opportunity for individual profit. Cicero suggests that if friendship is a matter of this kind of contract, then friends are merely another commodity (and perhaps a less profitable one), in the vein of real estate purchases, like *fundi* or *insulae*.

In his use of *fructus*, *utilitas* and *emolumentum*, Cicero directly echoes his description of the Epicureans in *On Laws* 1.42 and 49, where measuring is designed to produce just such outcomes, and the parallel vocabulary suggests that measuring and contracting are parallel processes. The self-interested disposition typical of the Epicurean finds its complementary action in treating communal virtues as commodities through a process of measuring. In *On Ends* 2.83, the argument in favor of virtue is contrasted

³⁸ The earliest citations in the *TLL* all use *foedus* with legal force. Asmis: 2008 considers the meaning of *foedus* in an Epicurean context in Lucretius. She looks specifically at the phrase *foedus naturae* (or *foedera naturae*) and the relationship between treaties and the physical world. Cicero may be building off *foedus* as an Epicurean watchword, but, with his emphasis on commodities here, he has clearly appealed to something different than the limits of the natural universe discussed by Lucretius.

not with an argument against pleasure, but with one against commercialized friendship. That is to say, Cicero's fundamental criticism of the Epicureans, though often connected to pleasure, can equally be expressed through a critique of ethical measuring.

Cicero again identifies Epicurean friendship as a form of commercial transaction at the end of *On Ends* 2 (117). Here he contrasts what he considers true friendship and its emphasis on the mutual appreciation of virtue with the utilitarian friendship of the Epicureans. Cicero explicitly connects Epicurean friendship with *commodus* and *faeneratio*.³⁹ In *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.122, the connection is even more direct. To conclude his criticism of Epicureanism in that book, Cotta states emphatically that the friend who seeks "his own benefit" (*ad nostrum fructum*) is participating not in "friendship" (*amicitia*) at all, but in "commerce" (*mercatura*). Friends become the equivalent of *prata et arva et pecudum greges* ("land and fields and herds of cattle").⁴⁰ Here the measuring critique is paired with the animal critique, highlighting another reason the animal connection works for Cicero and synthesizing his positions. Measuring, quantifying and commoditizing friends all disembed value from nature and place the individual's prerogative over that of the community.

The passage that best synthesizes Cicero's periphrastic criticism of the Epicureans is *On Friendship* 26–32, which brings us back to the opening observation of this chapter. The last of Cicero's dialogues, this work puts a period of sorts on several of the themes that emerge in his theoretical works of the 50s and 40s. And, as a text dedicated specifically to social attitudes and practices, *On Friendship* is uniquely positioned to criticize Epicureanism, if it is understood that Cicero's basic criticism of the Epicureans is their failure to observe the natural social bonds that undergird the Republic.

Laelius insists repeatedly throughout the dialogue that friendship should not be predicated on exchange. His position implicitly obviates the need for measuring or utilitarianism. In the structure of the work, as is typical of the genre, the text begins with Fannius and Scaevola asking Laelius for his thoughts on friendship. Laelius immediately offers a brief summary of

³⁹ Forms of *commodus* appear three times in reference to the Epicureans in 2.117, along with the reference to usury. It is true that *commodus*, its connection to commodity notwithstanding, need not carry a strictly commercial meaning (cf. *Nat. D.* 1.122), but its connection to other self-interested calculi makes its meaning clear (cf. not only *Leg.* 1.41 and *Fin.* 2.58, but also *Off.* 1.5 and 3.12). When paired with *faeneratio* in *On Ends* 2.117, the commercialized sense of *commodus* becomes readily apparent.

⁴⁰ Cf. the *fundi* and *insulae* of *On Ends* 2.83 above.

these thoughts and claims to have had his say. But his sons-in-law insist that he speak more, and so beginning at 26 he enters upon a fuller discussion. He immediately lays out two types of friendship: The first is characterized by exchange (especially *dandis recipiendis meritis*), while the second is attached to *amicitia's* root, *amor*. Fannius and Scaevola, who applied a sort of overly aggressive social pressure (*vim*) to oblige Laelius to keep speaking, seem to have been adhering to the former, disapproved version, while Laelius naturally prefers the latter.⁴¹ The Epicureans play no role in the discussion, but almost as if it cannot be helped, the talk of exchange relationships and the implied quantification and commercialization of friendship lead Laelius to invoke them (31–32):

Ut enim benefici liberalesque sumus, non ut exigamus gratiam (neque enim beneficium faeneramur sed natura propensi ad liberalitatem sumus), sic amicitiam non spe mercedis adducti sed quod omnis eius fructus in ipso amore inest, expetendam putamus. Ab his qui pecudum ritu ad voluptatem omnia referunt longe dissentiunt.

For just as we do not do good and show generosity so that we may extract *gratia* (for we do not lend good deeds at interest, but are by nature prone to generosity), so too we think friendship should be sought not because of a hope for the profit it will bring, but because its every benefit is contained in the very idea of love. These ideas differ sharply from the ideas of those who, in the manner of cattle, base all their decisions on pleasure.

The Epicurean watchwords *merces*, *fructus*, *voluptas* and *referre* appear in full force here, and the broader themes appear as well: the commercialization of friends, measuring and animals. Then, of course, all these ideas are set against concepts like *beneficium*, *gratia*, *liberalitas*, *natura* and, inevitably, *amicitia*. The Epicureans are Cicero's stock foil for correct social behavior, and since right social behavior lies at the root of Cicero's republican philosophy the Epicureans are Cicero's most basic, most fundamental object of criticism.

Cicero spent the last decade or more of his life arguing for the value of a rational and virtuous society in the face of the looming, then realized, autocracy of Julius Caesar. He did so in the belief that the Republic represented something abstractly good. Thus, Scipio can claim in the final paragraph of his *somnium* that "the greatest cares are concerned with the health of the nation" (*sunt autem optima curae de salute patriae; Rep. 6.29*). It is such *curae* that speed the soul's ascent to the heavens at bodily death.

⁴¹ When his sons-in-law reject his demurrals, Laelius exclaims: *vim hoc quidem est adferre* (26).

The opposite of serving the Republic – that is, the thing that slows souls down – is capitulation to the pleasures of the body. Cicero's great good, the Republic, found its greatest political enemy in Julius Caesar, who hastened its demise. Cicero's Republic, however, found its greatest theoretical enemy in the Epicureans, whose recourse to measuring and quantification led them to reject the inherent good of the virtues that hold a society together. This tendency of the Epicureans to resort to measuring on a self-interested scale was such a crucial element of Cicero's critique that he could and did use it to identify the Epicureans even without naming them explicitly.

Conclusions

Cicero's periphrastic references to the Epicureans reveal that Epicureanism functions as much more than a philosophical school for him: It serves as a symbol of many of the ideas he finds most distasteful, and in the end this symbolic function most clearly and fully explains why Cicero often avoids naming them. In part he wants to discredit them, and in part he wants to foreground their core beliefs. Both of these goals, moreover, work in service to his larger goal: He does not want his criticism to be limited to a philosophical school alone but to a mindset, which, in Cicero's understanding, the Epicureans most fully embody. It is an unnatural mindset because it promotes the comparison of relative values instead of adhering to absolute values instilled by nature. Furthermore, it is fundamentally antisocial because it uses profit, utility, pleasure, convenience and reward as its standards. In both these ways it is also an animal mindset that sets aside the human capacities for *ratio* (the true understanding of nature), *oratio* (the vehicle for social engagement) and the divine soul that houses both of them. And in all these ways it is a mindset indifferent to the foundations and institutions of the Republic.

Cicero the philosopher claims in the preface of *On Divination* 2 (among other places) that, in the face of an externally enforced *otium*, he has turned to the writing of theory as a means of serving the state. He goes on to claim that he has done so by educating the youth in the study of philosophy. But it is equally clear that he has set as his goal not educating them in Greek philosophy but in Roman philosophy. It is also clear that Roman philosophy, for Cicero at least, emanates from the institution of the Republic. At *On Divination* 2.7, he says: *In libris enim sententiam dicebamus, contionabamur, philosophiam nobis pro rei publicae procuratione substitutam putabamus* ("For it was in my books that I was offering up my opinion, in my

books that I was holding forth in speeches to the assembly. I considered that philosophy had for me taken up the role of the care of the Republic"). It is no accident, then, that so many of Cicero's works containing criticisms of Epicureanism take the form of dialogues that dramatize and exemplify the working of Roman social bonds.⁴²

The Epicureans are a philosophical target, to be sure, in the traditional sense: Cicero takes aim at their philosophy at length in *On Ends* and *On the Nature of the Gods* especially. But they are also a philosophical target in the context of the republicanized philosophy of Cicero because they represent an anti-republican ideology (the celebration of self-interest) and methodology (the quantification and measuring of all things, often by utilitarian criteria). They play the role of villain in both capacities in Cicero's dialogues, and, with his rhetorical circumlocutions, Cicero repeatedly represents them as posing a grave threat to republican values.

⁴² See Hall: 1996.