

Episode 302 - TD30 - Epicurus and Roads Paved With Good Intentions

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2025 at 11:18 AM

Welcome to Episode 302 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where we discuss this and all of our podcast episodes.

This week we continue covering Cicero's "Tusculan Disputations" from an Epicurean perspective. We will wrap up several loose ends from last week, complete [Section XX](#), and move forward into XXI.

The loose ends we need to cover are:

1 - Last week we spoke about the difficulty of taking sides in arguments where both sides claim the best of intentions, and even *the same* intention. This week let's take up the problem of how to proceed with both sides do in fact have good intentions, and let's talk about how to get off the "*road to hell*" that is paved with good intentions.

2 - We'll extend our discussion from disputes about pleasure to disputes about pain in looking at Cicero's final comment: "*But suppose we are mistaken as to his pleasure, are we so too as to his pain? I maintain therefore the impropriety of language which that man uses when talking of virtue, who would measure every great evil by pain?*"

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/68083655/media>

Post by “Cassius” of October 9, 2025 at 9:17 AM

Comments on this episode:

1 - Joshua stresses that Cicero seems to object to Epicurus' labeling of pain as evil even more than he objects to labeling pleasure as good.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

But suppose we are mistaken as to his pleasure, are we so too as to his pain? I maintain therefore the impropriety of language which that man uses when talking of virtue, who would measure every great evil by pain?"

Post by "Cassius" of October 9, 2025 at 5:31 PM

Episode 302 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week our episode is entitled: "Epicurus And The Road That Is Paved With Good Intentions"

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/68083655/media>

Post by "Don" of October 10, 2025 at 1:57 PM

As Joshua notes, I certainly agree that Cicero believes he had his good intentions and is sincere. But he certainly also throws up strawman arguments against the Garden with no attempts to steelman anything.

Post by "Cassius" of October 14, 2025 at 4:34 PM

In this episode, one of the arguments that Joshua raised from Thomas Moore's "Utopia" in defense of Pleasure-based ethics deserves to be remembered. I'm therefore pasting this excerpt from the transcript with the important point underlined so it is easier to find in the future. Talking about Thomas Moore, this is what Joshua said:

Joshua: He's working through this stuff in his own mind, and now he has a safe way to explore these ideas without committing to them. On the subject of the chief Good and on pleasure, Thomas Moore says this. He says,

Quote

The Utopians say that the first dictate of reason is the kindling in us of the love and reverence for the divine Majesty to whom we owe both all that we have and all that we can ever hope for. In the next place, Reason directs us to keep our minds as free from passion and as cheerful as we can, and that we should consider ourselves as bound by the ties of good nature and humanity, to use our utmost endeavors to help forward the happiness of all other persons.

For there has never been a man who was such a morose and severe pursuer of virtue, such an enemy to pleasure, that though he set hard rules for men to undergo much pain, many watchings, and other rigors, yet did not at the same time advise them to do all they could in order to relieve and ease the miserable, and who did not represent gentleness and good nature as amiable dispositions. And from this the Utopians infer that if a man ought to advance the welfare and comfort of the rest of mankind, there being no virtue more proper and peculiar to our nature than to ease the miseries of others, to free from trouble and anxiety, in furnishing them with the comforts of life in which pleasure consists. Nature much more vigorously leads us to do all of these things for ourselves. A life of pleasure is either a real evil, and in that case we ought not to assist others in their pursuit of it, but on the contrary, to keep them from it.

All we can do is from that which is most hurtful and deadly. Or if for life of pleasure is a good thing, so that we not only may, but ought to help others to it, why then ought not a man to begin with himself? So we have that question first of all. If virtue means, at least in part, easing the misery and pain of others, why is it not virtuous to ease our own misery and pain?

This is in Thomas Moore's Utopia. This is how they get to pleasure, and he expresses it even more clearly than this. He says:

Quote

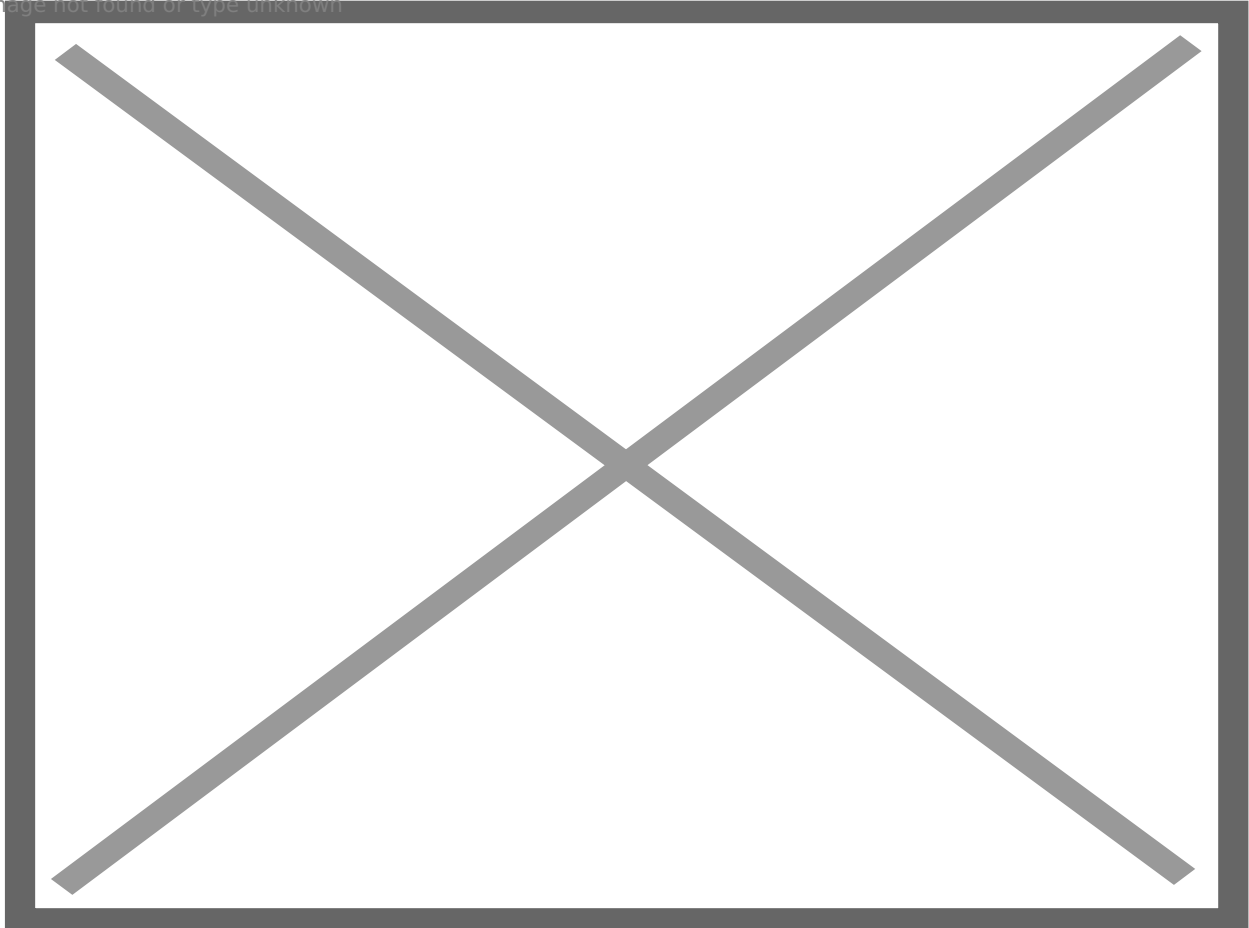
Since no man can be more bound to look after the good of another than after his own. For nature cannot direct us to be good and kind to others and yet at the same time to be unmerciful and cruel to ourselves. Thus, as the Utopians define virtue to be living according to nature, so they imagine that nature prompts all people on to seek after pleasure as the end of all they do.

Joshua: Now, that is not at all a bad starting place if you're interested in identifying the chief good. And you could imagine reading some of this directly out of Torquatus or something that virtue means living according to nature, and nature prompts all people on to seek after. Pleasure is the end of all they do. That's why pleasure is the chief good. And moreover, since virtue means to ease the pain and hardship of others, it's also must be virtuous to ease our own pain and hardship.

Post by “Cassius” of October 19, 2025 at 4:34 PM

Thanks to Don's suggestion I am finding it easier (but still not fast) to generate transcripts of the shows. Below is a link to an edited version of Episode 302 -

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[Epicurus And The Road That Is Paved With Good Intentions](#)

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