

Episode 156 - Lucretius Today Interviews Dr. Emily Austin - Part One

Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2023 at 12:58 AM

Welcome to episode 156, a special two-part Episode of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only 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 too find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics. Today we are very pleased to bring you an interview with a special guest: Dr. Emily Austin, professor of Philosophy at Wake Forest University.

Dr. Austin is author of the book "Living for Pleasure: an Epicurean Guide to Life," which was published in November 2022 by the Oxford University Press as part of its Guides to the Good Life Series. Dr. Austin graduated summa cum laude in philosophy from Hendrix College in Arkansas, and she received her doctorate from Washington University in St. Louis in 2009. Since that time, she has been teaching philosophy at Wake Forest in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Dr. Austin applies both her academic credentials and her teaching skills to the task of showing how Epicurean philosophy differs sharply from Stoicism, and how it stands for a truly positive approach to life that isn't grounded in asceticism, but in a complete understanding of the central and uncompromising appreciation of "Pleasure" in the pursuit of happiness.

Time Stamps:

- 19:15 - How do you deal with the objection that "pleasure" cannot be the full goal of life?
 - People can't describe their view of the good life without discussing pleasure.
 - Some people seem to think that pain is good
 - Discussion of the opening of book 2 of Lucretius - looking out from safety at people who are in distress
 - Cultural problems today arising from Puritanism
- 28:00 - What is the role of one's view of "death" in Epicurean philosophy?
 - Desire for immortal life is corrosive
 - References to "Lonesome Dove"
 - References to Montaigne
- 39:45 - Some people see a tension between pursuit of pleasure as opposed to pursuit of tranquility. How do you reconcile that question and summarize the issue of how much pleasure is enough? Was Epicurus an ascetic?
 - Epicurus is not only about tranquility, and this is a misunderstanding among modern supporters of Epicurus as well as his opponents.

- Epicurus does not oppose natural and unnecessary desires.
- Dr Austin had to insist that the word "Pleasure" be in the title of her book.
- It is a mistake to make Epicurus too much like other tranquility seeking philosophies, but the first step most people need to take is to deal with anxiety so they can then pursue and prioritize desires more prudently.
- It is a charitable impulse to say that Epicurus is not about partying all the time, but people over-correct and seem to make Epicurus to be opposed to pleasure.

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