

Episode 207 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 15 - Does Epicurean Philosophy Lead to Injustice?

Post by “Cassius” of December 22, 2023 at 5:25 AM

Welcome to Episode 207 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 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.

This week we continue our discussion of Book Two of Cicero's On Ends, which is largely devoted Cicero's attack on Epicurean Philosophy. Going through this book gives us the opportunity to review those attacks, take them apart, and respond to them as an ancient Epicurean might have done, and much more fully than Cicero allowed Torquatus, his Epicurean spokesman, to do.

Follow along with us here: [Cicero's On Ends - Complete Reid Edition](#). Check any typos or other questions against the original PDF which can be found [here](#).

This week we move continue in Section XVI as Cicero begins a series of illustrations which he holds up as examples of moral worthiness (as if Epicurus' views do not embrace this conduct as well!)

XVI. ... It is not proper to imagine your bad man as a coward or a weakling, torturing himself about any- thing he has done, and frightened at everything, but rather as one who craftily judges of everything by his interests, being keen, shrewd and hardened, so that he readily devises means for cheating without detection, without witnesses, without any accomplice. Do you think I am speaking of Lucius Tubulus ? He, having presided as praetor over the court for trying murderers, took bribes in view of trials with such openness, that in the following year Publius Scaevola, the tribune of the commons, carried a bill in the popular assembly directing an inquiry to be made into the matter. Under this bill the senate voted that the inquiry should be conducted by Gnaeus Caepio the consul; Tubulus went into exile at once, and did not venture to defend himself; the facts were indeed evident.

XVII. We are inquiring then not merely about an unprincipled man but about one who is both crafty and unprincipled, as Quintus Pompeius shewed himself when he disowned the treaty with Numantia, one moreover who is not afraid of everything, but, to begin with, sets at nought the consciousness that is within him, which it costs him no effort to suppress. The man whom we

call secret and deep, so far from informing against himself, will actually produce the impression that he is grieved by another person's unprincipled action; for what does shrewdness mean, if not this? I recollect acting as adviser to Publius Sextilius Rufus when he laid before his friends this difficulty, that he was heir to Quintus Fadius Gallus, in whose will there was a statement that he had requested Rufus to see that the whole property passed to the daughter. This statement Sextilius said was untrue, and he might say so without fear, for who was to refute him? None of us believed him, and it was more probable that the falsehood lay with the man to whom it brought advantage than with him who had written that he had made the very request which it was his duty to make. The man said further that having sworn to observe the Voconian law he could not venture, unless his friends thought otherwise, to contravene it.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/58116258>