

Episode 271 - TD01 - Understanding Epicurus Through Tusculan Disputations

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2025 at 10:56 AM

Welcome to Episode 271 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 begin a new series covering Cicero's Tusculan Disputations from an Epicurean viewpoint. This series addresses five of the greatest questions in philosophy, with Cicero speaking for the majority and Epicurus the main opponent:

- 1. Is Death An Evil? (Cicero says no and Epicurus says no, but for very different reasons)**
- 2. Is Pain An Evil? (Cicero says no, Epicurus says yes)**
- 3. Does the Wise Man Experience Grief and Fear? (Cicero says no, Epicurus says yes)**
- 4. Does the Wise Man Experience Joy and Desire? (Cicero says no, Epicurus says yes)**
- 5. Is Virtue Sufficient For A Happy Life? (Cicero says yes, Epicurus says no)**

As we found in Cicero's "On Ends" and "On The Nature of the Gods," Cicero treated Epicurean Philosophy as a major contender in the battle between the philosophies, and in discussing this conflict and explaining Epicurus' answers to these questions, we will deepen our understanding of Epicurus and how he compares to the other major schools.

We'll be reading from the [Charles Yonge edition](#).

Here is a link to our discussion guide: [Epicurean Views Of Tusculun Disputations](#)

Our thread here at the forum specifically dedicated to [Tusculan Disputations is here](#).

As usual, this guide is a work in progress, and at the moment the titles of the sections are in flux. Each bullet point contains a section of text referencing Epicurus, but the heading assigned may not reflect the full topic of the discussion. Feel free to make suggestions on the heading titles, additional surrounding text which should be included for clarity, or any other commentary

that would be good to insert to explain each section, and we'll update the discussion guide as we proceed.

The current list of headings includes:

1. Epicureans argue that at death we neither become gods nor companions of gods, so death is not a better state for us
2. Epicureans charge Democritus with having said that the body has feeling after death.
3. No one but Epicureans read Epicurean texts
4. Epicurus gave in to effeminacy in fearing pain
5. Epicurus said there is no evil in infamy itself unless accompanied by pain
6. Epicurus is allegedly laughing at us in regard to pain.
7. Epicurus says that grief arises naturally when we imagine an evil.
8. Epicurus on anticipating future pains - he says it is folly to do so as the Cyreniacs suggest we should.
9. On the happy life according to Epicurus (and Zeno the Epicurean)
10. On Epicurus' consolation
11. Epicurus on attraction as physical
12. On Epicurus' alleged inconsistency
13. Epicurus on the wise man while being tortured
14. Epicurus on nothing good but pleasure
15. Epicurus on the division of desires
16. Epicurus on living in accord with local law.
17. Epicureans on the wise man being always happy.

For purposes of planning ahead, this series will be followed by a series on "Debating Epicurus in Academic Questions." A thread devoted to that series where you can make comments on what aspects of "Academic Questions" to include is [here](#).

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