

Episode Ninety-Eight - The Epicurean View of Justice (Part One)

Post by “Cassius” of November 26, 2021 at 1:51 PM

Welcome to Episode Ninety-Eight 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.

I am your host Cassius, and together with our panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the six books of Lucretius' poem, and we'll discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself, and we suggest the best place to start is the book "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Canadian professor Norman DeWitt.

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.

At this point in our podcast we have completed our first line-by-line review of the poem, and we have turned to the presentation of Epicurean ethics found in Cicero's On Ends. Today we continue with that material and focus on "Justice" starting with line fifty.

Now let's join Martin reading today's text:

[50] XVI. Justice still is left to complete our statement concerning the whole of virtue, but considerations nearly similar may be urged. Just as I have proved wisdom, temperance and courage to be linked with pleasure, so that they cannot possibly by any means be sundered or severed from it, so we must deem of justice, which not only never injures any person, but on the contrary always produces some benefit, not solely by reason of its own power and constitution, whereby it calms our minds, but also by inspiring hope that we shall lack none of the objects which nature when uncorrupted craves. And as recklessness and caprice and cowardice always torture the mind and always bring unrest and tumult, so if wickedness has established itself in a man's mind, the mere fact of its presence causes tumult; if moreover it has carried out any deed, however secretly it may have acted, yet it will never feel a trust, that the action will always remain concealed. In most cases the acts of wicked men are at first dogged by suspicion, then by talk and rumour, then by the prosecutor, then by the judge; many have actually informed against themselves, as in your own consulship.

[51] But if there are any who seem to themselves to be sufficiently barricaded and fortified against all privity on the part of their fellow men, still they tremble before the privity of the gods, and imagine that the very cares by which their minds are devoured night and day are imposed upon them, with a view to their punishment, by the eternal gods. Again, from wicked acts what new influence can accrue tending to the diminution of annoyances, equal to that which tends to their increase, not only from consciousness of the actions themselves, but also from legal penalties and the hatred of the community? And yet some men exhibit no moderation in money-making, or office, or military command, or wantonness, or gluttony, or the remaining passions, which are not lessened but rather intensified by the trophies of wickedness, so that such persons seem fit to be repressed rather than to be taught their error.

[52] True reason beckons men of properly sound mind to pursue justice, fairness and honor; nor are acts of injustice advantageous to a man without eloquence or influence, who cannot easily succeed in what he attempts, nor maintain his success if he wins it, and large resources either of wealth or of talent suit better with a generous spirit, for those who exhibit this spirit attract to themselves goodwill and affection, which is very well calculated to ensure a peaceful life; and this is the truer in that men have no reason for sinning.

[53] For the passions which proceed from nature are easily satisfied without committing any wrong; while we must not succumb to those which are groundless, since they yearn for nothing worthy of our craving, and more loss is involved in the mere fact of wrong doing, than profit in the results which are produced by the wrong doing. So one would not be right in describing even justice as a thing to be wished for on its own account, but rather because it brings with it a very large amount of agreeableness. For to be the object of esteem and affection is agreeable just because it renders life safer and more replete with pleasures. Therefore we think that wickedness should be shunned, not alone on account of the disadvantages which fall to the lot of the wicked, but much rather because when it pervades a man's soul it never permits him to breathe freely or to rest.

[54] But if the accolades passed even on the virtues themselves, over which the eloquence of all other philosophers especially runs riot, can find no vent unless it be referred to pleasure, and pleasure is the only thing which invites us to the pursuit of itself, and attracts us by reason of its own nature, then there can be no doubt that of all things good it is the supreme and ultimate good, and that a life of happiness means nothing else but a life attended by pleasure.

SUPPLEMENT:

[Principal Doctrines](#) and Vatican Sayings which are relevant to Justice.

[PD06](#). Whatever you can provide yourself with to secure protection from men is a natural good.

[PD07](#). Some men wished to become famous and conspicuous, thinking that they would thus win for themselves safety from other men. Wherefore if the life of such men is safe, they have obtained the good which nature craves; but if it is not safe, they do not possess that for which they strove at first by the instinct of nature.

[PD08](#). No pleasure is a bad thing in itself; but the means which produce some pleasures bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasures.

[PD10](#). If the things that produce the pleasures of profligates could dispel the fears of the mind about the phenomena of the sky, and death, and its pains, and also teach the limits of desires (and of pains), we should never have cause to blame them: for they would be filling themselves full, with pleasures from every source, and never have pain of body or mind, which is the evil of life.

[PD31](#). The justice which arises from nature is a pledge of mutual advantage, to restrain men from harming one another, and save them from being harmed.

[PD32](#). For all living things which have not been able to make compacts not to harm one another, or be harmed, nothing ever is either just or unjust; and likewise, too, for all tribes of men which have been unable, or unwilling, to make compacts not to harm or be harmed.

[PD33](#). Justice never is anything in itself, but in the dealings of men with one another, in any place whatever, and at any time, it is a kind of compact not to harm or be harmed. [see note below]

[PD34](#). Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which attaches to the apprehension of being unable to escape those appointed to punish such actions.

[PD35](#). It is not possible for one who acts in secret contravention of the terms of the compact not to harm or be harmed to be confident that he will escape detection, even if, at present, he escapes a thousand times. For up to the time of death it cannot be certain that he will indeed escape.

[PD36](#). In its general aspect, justice is the same for all, for it is a kind of mutual advantage in the dealings of men with one another; but with reference to the individual peculiarities of a country, or any other circumstances, the same thing does not turn out to be just for all.

[PD37](#). Among actions which are sanctioned as just by law, that which is proved, on examination, to be of advantage, in the requirements of men's dealings with one another, has the guarantee of justice, whether it is the same for all or not. But if a man makes a law, and it does not turn out to lead to advantage in men's dealings with each other, then it no longer has the essential nature of justice. And even if the advantage in the matter of justice shifts from one side to the other, but for a while accords with the general concept, it is nonetheless just for that period, in the eyes of those who do not confound themselves with empty sounds, but look to the actual facts.

[PD38](#). Where, provided the circumstances have not been altered, actions which were considered just have been shown not to accord with the general concept, in actual practice, then they are not just. But where, when circumstances have changed, the same actions which were sanctioned as just no longer lead to advantage, they were just at the time, when they were of advantage for the dealings of fellow-citizens with one another, but subsequently they are no longer just, when no longer of advantage.

[PD39](#). The man who has best ordered the element of disquiet arising from external circumstances has made those things that he could akin to himself, and the rest at least not alien; but with all to which he could not do even this, he has refrained from mixing, and has expelled from his life all which it was of advantage to treat thus.

[PD40](#). As many as possess the power to procure complete immunity from their neighbors, these also live most pleasantly with one another, since they have the most certain pledge of security, and, after they have enjoyed the fullest intimacy, they do not lament the previous departure of a dead friend, as though he were to be pitied.

VS07. It is hard for an evil-doer to escape detection, but to be confident that he will continue to escape detection indefinitely is impossible.

VS12. The just man is most free from disturbance, while the unjust is full of the utmost disturbance.

VS13. Among the things held to be just by law, whatever is proved to be of advantage in men's dealings has the stamp of justice, whether or not it be the same for all; but if a man makes a law and it does not prove to be mutually advantageous, then this is no longer just. And if what is mutually advantageous varies, and only for a time corresponds to our concept of justice, nevertheless for that time it is just, for those who do not trouble themselves about empty words, but look simply at the facts.

VS43. The love of money, if unjustly gained, is impious, and, if justly gained, is shameful; for it is unseemly to be parsimonious, even with justice on one's side.

VS62. Now if parents are justly angry with their children, it is certainly useless to fight against it, and not to ask for pardon; but if their anger is unjust and irrational, it is quite ridiculous to add fuel to their irrational passion by nursing one's own indignation, and not to attempt to turn aside their wrath in other ways by gentleness.

Post by "Cassius" of November 27, 2021 at 3:14 PM

We'll plan to devote the whole of Episode 98 to justice based on the above text. If anyone has topics related to justice they they would like us to be sure to talk about, please add those suggestions here.

One aspect I want us to be sure to cover is a set of questions that underlies all of the virtues, but is particularly stark as to justice:

If justice (or any other virtue) is not absolute - and it seems clear that Epicurus held that it was not absolute - then what exactly IS justice (or any other virtue)?

Is justice (or any other virtue) recognizable only in retrospect? (Meaning that we don't know whether an action was just/virtuous or not until we know the result?)

Is justice (or any other virtue) simply a name which we apply to certain categories of human action? (Such as "courage" being a label we apply to how we face adversity?)

If we decide to talk about "examples" in the field of justice, let's try to be sure to pick examples that are at least several hundred years old so that we don't run afoul of our "no-politics" guideline. Perhaps we can even use examples like the Roman Civil War, and the conflict between Julius Caesar and the Conspirators, since it's very difficult for most of us nowadays to figure out what the fighting was all about.

[Principal Doctrines](#) Which Are Relevant to Justice:

PD06. Whatever you can provide yourself with to secure protection from men is a natural good.

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Post by “Joshua” of November 28, 2021 at 12:02 PM

[Cassius](#) , you can read this long passage to see whether I've portrayed Thomas More correctly. The quote at the bottom from John Locke gets to the real heart of what I was talking about.

[Edit; See my next post]

From *Utopia*, by Thomas More;

Quote

“These are their religious principles:—That the soul of man is immortal, and that God of His goodness has designed that it should be happy; and that He has, therefore, appointed rewards for good and virtuous actions, and punishments for vice, to be distributed after this life. Though these principles of religion are conveyed down among them by tradition, they think that even reason itself determines a man to believe and acknowledge them; and freely confess that if these were taken away, no man would be so insensible as not to seek after pleasure by all possible means, lawful or unlawful, using only this caution—that a lesser pleasure might not stand in the way of a greater, and that no pleasure ought to be pursued that should draw a great deal of pain after it; for they think it the maddest thing in the world to pursue virtue, that is a sour and difficult thing, and not only to renounce the pleasures of life, but willingly to undergo much pain and trouble, if a man has no prospect of a reward. And what reward can there be for one that has passed his whole life, not only without pleasure, but in pain, if there is nothing to be expected after death? Yet they do not place happiness in all sorts of pleasures, but only in those that in themselves are good and honest. There is a party among them who place happiness in bare virtue; others think that our natures are conducted by virtue to happiness, as that which is the chief good of man. They define virtue thus—that it is a living according to Nature, and think that we are made by God for that end; they believe that a man then follows the dictates of Nature when he pursues or avoids things according to the direction of reason. They say that the first dictate of reason is the kindling in us a 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 endeavours to help forward the happiness of all other persons; for there never was any man 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 thence they 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 them to do all this for himself. 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, as from that which is most hurtful and deadly; or if it 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? 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 they 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. They also observe that in order to our supporting the pleasures of life, Nature inclines us to enter into society; for there is no man so much raised above the rest of mankind as to be the only favourite of Nature, who, on the contrary, seems to have placed on a level all those that belong to the same species. Upon this they infer that no man ought to seek his own conveniences so eagerly as to prejudice others; and therefore they think that not only all agreements between private persons ought to be observed, but likewise that all those laws ought to be kept which either a good prince has published in due form, or to which a people that is neither oppressed with tyranny nor circumvented by fraud has consented, for distributing those conveniences of life which afford us all our pleasures.

“They think it is an evidence of true wisdom for a man to pursue his own advantage as far as the laws allow it, they account it piety to prefer the public good to one’s private concerns, but they think it unjust for a man to seek for pleasure by snatching another man’s pleasures from him; and, on the contrary, they think it a sign of a gentle and good soul for a man to dispense with his own advantage for the good of others, and that by this means a good man finds as much pleasure one way as he parts with another; for as he may expect the like from others when he may come to need it, so, if that should fail him, yet the sense of a good action, and the reflections that he makes on the love and gratitude of those whom he has so obliged, gives the mind more pleasure than the body could have found in that from which it had restrained itself. They are also persuaded that God will make up the loss of those small pleasures with a vast and endless joy, of which religion easily convinces a good soul.

“Thus, upon an inquiry into the whole matter, they reckon that all our actions, and even all our virtues, terminate in pleasure, as in our chief end and greatest happiness; and they call every motion or state, either of body or mind, in which Nature teaches us to delight, a pleasure. Thus they cautiously limit pleasure only to those appetites to which

Nature leads us; for they say that Nature leads us only to those delights to which reason, as well as sense, carries us, and by which we neither injure any other person nor lose the possession of greater pleasures, and of such as draw no troubles after them. But they look upon those delights which men by a foolish, though common, mistake call pleasure, as if they could change as easily the nature of things as the use of words, as things that greatly obstruct their real happiness, instead of advancing it, because they so entirely possess the minds of those that are once captivated by them with a false notion of pleasure that there is no room left for pleasures of a truer or purer kind.

“There are many things that in themselves have nothing that is truly delightful; on the contrary, they have a good deal of bitterness in them; and yet, from our perverse appetites after forbidden objects, are not only ranked among the pleasures, but are made even the greatest designs, of life. Among those who pursue these sophisticated pleasures they reckon such as I mentioned before, who think themselves really the better for having fine clothes; in which they think they are doubly mistaken, both in the opinion they have of their clothes, and in that they have of themselves. For if you consider the use of clothes, why should a fine thread be thought better than a coarse one? And yet these men, as if they had some real advantages beyond others, and did not owe them wholly to their mistakes, look big, seem to fancy themselves to be more valuable, and imagine that a respect is due to them for the sake of a rich garment, to which they would not have pretended if they had been more meanly clothed, and even resent it as an affront if that respect is not paid them. It is also a great folly to be taken with outward marks of respect, which signify nothing; for what true or real pleasure can one man find in another’s standing bare or making legs to him? Will the bending another man’s knees give ease to yours? and will the head’s being bare cure the madness of yours? And yet it is wonderful to see how this false notion of pleasure bewitches many who delight themselves with the fancy of their nobility, and are pleased with this conceit—that they are descended from ancestors who have been held for some successions rich, and who have had great possessions; for this is all that makes nobility at present. Yet they do not think themselves a whit the less noble, though their immediate parents have left none of this wealth to them, or though they themselves have squandered it away. The Utopians have no better opinion of those who are much taken with gems and precious stones, and who account it a degree of happiness next to a divine one if they can purchase one that is very extraordinary, especially if it be of that sort of stones that is then in greatest request, for the same sort is not at all times universally of the same value, nor will men buy it unless it be dismantled and taken out of the gold. The jeweller is then made to give good security, and required solemnly to swear that the stone is true, that, by such an exact caution, a false one might not be bought instead of a true; though, if you were to examine it, your

eye could find no difference between the counterfeit and that which is true; so that they are all one to you, as much as if you were blind. Or can it be thought that they who heap up a useless mass of wealth, not for any use that it is to bring them, but merely to please themselves with the contemplation of it, enjoy any true pleasure in it? The delight they find is only a false shadow of joy. Those are no better whose error is somewhat different from the former, and who hide it out of their fear of losing it; for what other name can fit the hiding it in the earth, or, rather, the restoring it to it again, it being thus cut off from being useful either to its owner or to the rest of mankind? And yet the owner, having hid it carefully, is glad, because he thinks he is now sure of it. If it should be stole, the owner, though he might live perhaps ten years after the theft, of which he knew nothing, would find no difference between his having or losing it, for both ways it was equally useless to him.

“Among those foolish pursuers of pleasure they reckon all that delight in hunting, in fowling, or gaming, of whose madness they have only heard, for they have no such things among them. But they have asked us, ‘What sort of pleasure is it that men can find in throwing the dice?’ (for if there were any pleasure in it, they think the doing it so often should give one a surfeit of it); ‘and what pleasure can one find in hearing the barking and howling of dogs, which seem rather odious than pleasant sounds?’ Nor can they comprehend the pleasure of seeing dogs run after a hare, more than of seeing one dog run after another; for if the seeing them run is that which gives the pleasure, you have the same entertainment to the eye on both these occasions, since that is the same in both cases. But if the pleasure lies in seeing the hare killed and torn by the dogs, this ought rather to stir pity, that a weak, harmless, and fearful hare should be devoured by strong, fierce, and cruel dogs. Therefore all this business of hunting is, among the Utopians, turned over to their butchers, and those, as has been already said, are all slaves, and they look on hunting as one of the basest parts of a butcher’s work, for they account it both more profitable and more decent to kill those beasts that are more necessary and useful to mankind, whereas the killing and tearing of so small and miserable an animal can only attract the huntsman with a false show of pleasure, from which he can reap but small advantage. They look on the desire of the bloodshed, even of beasts, as a mark of a mind that is already corrupted with cruelty, or that at least, by too frequent returns of so brutal a pleasure, must degenerate into it.

“Thus though the rabble of mankind look upon these, and on innumerable other things of the same nature, as pleasures, the Utopians, on the contrary, observing that there is nothing in them truly pleasant, conclude that they are not to be reckoned among pleasures; for though these things may create some tickling in the senses (which seems to be a true notion of pleasure), yet they imagine that this does not arise from the thing itself, but from a depraved custom, which may so vitiate a man’s taste that bitter things may pass for sweet, as women with child think pitch or tallow taste

sweeter than honey; but as a man's sense, when corrupted either by a disease or some ill habit, does not change the nature of other things, so neither can it change the nature of pleasure.

"They reckon up several sorts of pleasures, which they call true ones; some belong to the body, and others to the mind. The pleasures of the mind lie in knowledge, and in that delight which the contemplation of truth carries with it; to which they add the joyful reflections on a well-spent life, and the assured hopes of a future happiness. They divide the pleasures of the body into two sorts—the one is that which gives our senses some real delight, and is performed either by recruiting Nature and supplying those parts which feed the internal heat of life by eating and drinking, or when Nature is eased of any surcharge that oppresses it, when we are relieved from sudden pain, or that which arises from satisfying the appetite which Nature has wisely given to lead us to the propagation of the species. There is another kind of pleasure that arises neither from our receiving what the body requires, nor its being relieved when overcharged, and yet, by a secret unseen virtue, affects the senses, raises the passions, and strikes the mind with generous impressions—this is, the pleasure that arises from music. Another kind of bodily pleasure is that which results from an undisturbed and vigorous constitution of body, when life and active spirits seem to actuate every part. This lively health, when entirely free from all mixture of pain, of itself gives an inward pleasure, independent of all external objects of delight; and though this pleasure does not so powerfully affect us, nor act so strongly on the senses as some of the others, yet it may be esteemed as the greatest of all pleasures; and almost all the Utopians reckon it the foundation and basis of all the other joys of life, since this alone makes the state of life easy and desirable, and when this is wanting, a man is really capable of no other pleasure. They look upon freedom from pain, if it does not rise from perfect health, to be a state of stupidity rather than of pleasure. This subject has been very narrowly canvassed among them, and it has been debated whether a firm and entire health could be called a pleasure or not. Some have thought that there was no pleasure but what was 'excited' by some sensible motion in the body. But this opinion has been long ago excluded from among them; so that now they almost universally agree that health is the greatest of all bodily pleasures; and that as there is a pain in sickness which is as opposite in its nature to pleasure as sickness itself is to health, so they hold that health is accompanied with pleasure. And if any should say that sickness is not really pain, but that it only carries pain along with it, they look upon that as a fetch of subtlety that does not much alter the matter. It is all one, in their opinion, whether it be said that health is in itself a pleasure, or that it begets a pleasure, as fire gives heat, so it be granted that all those whose health is entire have a true pleasure in the enjoyment of it. And they reason thus:—'What is the pleasure of eating, but that a man's health, which had been weakened, does, with the assistance of food, drive away hunger, and

so recruiting itself, recovers its former vigour? And being thus refreshed it finds a pleasure in that conflict; and if the conflict is pleasure, the victory must yet breed a greater pleasure, except we fancy that it becomes stupid as soon as it has obtained that which it pursued, and so neither knows nor rejoices in its own welfare.' If it is said that health cannot be felt, they absolutely deny it; for what man is in health, that does not perceive it when he is awake? Is there any man that is so dull and stupid as not to acknowledge that he feels a delight in health? And what is delight but another name for pleasure?

"But, of all pleasures, they esteem those to be most valuable that lie in the mind, the chief of which arise out of true virtue and the witness of a good conscience. They account health the chief pleasure that belongs to the body; for they think that the pleasure of eating and drinking, and all the other delights of sense, are only so far desirable as they give or maintain health; but they are not pleasant in themselves otherwise than as they resist those impressions that our natural infirmities are still making upon us. For as a wise man desires rather to avoid diseases than to take physic, and to be freed from pain rather than to find ease by remedies, so it is more desirable not to need this sort of pleasure than to be obliged to indulge it. If any man imagines that there is a real happiness in these enjoyments, he must then confess that he would be the happiest of all men if he were to lead his life in perpetual hunger, thirst, and itching, and, by consequence, in perpetual eating, drinking, and scratching himself; which any one may easily see would be not only a base, but a miserable, state of a life. These are, indeed, the lowest of pleasures, and the least pure, for we can never relish them but when they are mixed with the contrary pains. The pain of hunger must give us the pleasure of eating, and here the pain out-balances the pleasure. And as the pain is more vehement, so it lasts much longer; for as it begins before the pleasure, so it does not cease but with the pleasure that extinguishes it, and both expire together. They think, therefore, none of those pleasures are to be valued any further than as they are necessary; yet they rejoice in them, and with due gratitude acknowledge the tenderness of the great Author of Nature, who has planted in us appetites, by which those things that are necessary for our preservation are likewise made pleasant to us. For how miserable a thing would life be if those daily diseases of hunger and thirst were to be carried off by such bitter drugs as we must use for those diseases that return seldomer upon us! And thus these pleasant, as well as proper, gifts of Nature maintain the strength and the sprightliness of our bodies.

Display More

From *Letter Concerning Toleration*, by John Locke

Quote

Lastly, those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist.

Post by “Joshua” of November 28, 2021 at 12:14 PM

Ok, I found the passage from *Utopia* that I was looking for: **[Edit; See my post above]**

Quote

[...] He made a solemn and severe law against such as should so far degenerate from the dignity of human nature, as to think that our souls died with our bodies, or that the world was governed by chance, without a wise overruling Providence: for they all formerly believed that there was a state of rewards and punishments to the good and bad after this life; and they now look on those that think otherwise as scarce fit to be counted men, since they degrade so noble a being as the soul, and reckon it no better than a beast's: thus they are far from looking on such men as fit for human society, or to be citizens of a well-ordered commonwealth; since a man of such principles must needs, as oft as he dares do it, despise all their laws and customs: for there is no doubt to be made, that a man who is afraid of nothing but the law, and apprehends nothing after death, will not scruple to break through all the laws of his country, either by fraud or force, when by this means he may satisfy his appetites.

A more recent take, from a sitting Supreme Court Justice;

Quote

"If you're an atheist, what does an oath mean?" -Clarence Thomas

Post by “Godfrey” of November 28, 2021 at 5:27 PM

Excellent posts [Joshua](#) ! This really gets to the meat of the opposition to Epicurean justice. From what little I know of it, it goes back at least to Plato's Republic and the idea of the noble lie: the

myth that is useful for governing the masses. Hence the fierce opposition to Epicurus, who sought truth and ended up shattering the "noble" myths.

Post by “Joshua” of November 28, 2021 at 6:34 PM

Thank you Godfrey! I wish I had thought to find these quotes before we recorded, but, alas! You'll have to listen to me ramble on from memory.

Post by “Cassius” of November 28, 2021 at 7:38 PM

We had a great discussion today and I will get the audio posted asap so people will have time to make comments and pose questions before next week.

Post by “Cassius” of November 29, 2021 at 10:47 PM

Still working on the edit but let me post this before I forget. We did a good job of staying away from contemporary politics in this episode but in explaining the depth of passion that is often involved in discussing justice Joshua brought up the historical example of John Browns raid on Harpers Ferry as an example of how different people can see the same incident from starkly different perspectives.

For those who aren't as elderly as I am I asked Joshua if he had seen the well-known but old movie on the story. The movie was "Santa Fe Trail" and here is the link below. Raymond Massey, the actor who played John Brown, did a great job of conveying Browns intensity, and he conveys the same intensity in a clip I like to use to dramatize the issue of "peace and safety" and I am posting tonight also in [Kalosyni's thread](#).

So if someone wanted they could enjoy a Raymond Massey film festival with these links.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIpzPZhrQz4&t=12>

In both of these movies I have linked I think a reasonable person could ask at the end: Is Raymond Massey's character crazy? Or is he the sanest person you've ever seen?

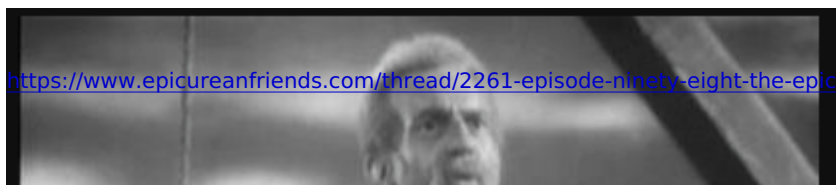
PS - In "Santa Fe Trail" Massey is clearly portraying a religious zealot (which may or may not be accurate historically) so I don't think anyone would argue that an Epicurean would endorse that motivation. But someone could act similarly without a religious motivation, and the main reason for bringing up the Brown figure is the reason Joshua gave - to illustrate divergence of opinion on justice. In "Things To Come" we don't have religion as a factor at all, and I think we do have a totally safe illustration on views of feeling and pleasure we can debate in detail.

Post by "Godfrey" of November 30, 2021 at 12:51 AM

Not to get political, but it also features Ronald Reagan. I'm not sure if that's him or Massey on the right in the still.

Post by "Cassius" of November 30, 2021 at 6:31 AM

Right and we mentioned that in the podcast. Yes that is Reagan on the right in the still, but he is not the star - this is an Errol Flynn / Olivia de Havilland movie vehicle. I will paste a picture of [redacted] with this beard sort of makes me



And to follow up on Godfrey's comment, another interesting actor in that still photo is on the far left - that is Alan Hale, father of the "Skipper" in Gilligan's Island - when you see him in the movie theres a strong family resemblance in looks and mannerisms.

Post by “Joshua” of November 30, 2021 at 9:41 AM

I've been listening to the unedited recording on my commute, and one point that I'd like to address in clear terms is "Natural Law". Cassius does a good job of covering the general idea, but we never gave it a name. When I talk to my younger relations who go to Catholic schools and listen to Catholic podcasts, I get the impression that Natural Law has become an important part of the pedagogy by contrasting it with 'moral relativism', which is, in my view, their code word for the degenerate morals of a godless society.

My initial response is twofold—first, that Natural Law is not simply wrong-headed but actually quite harmful; and second, that the whole history of their religion and it's scripture is one of clear moral relativism, which they express most obviously by saying that Jesus' resurrection stands as a new revelation, and that thereby some (but by no means all) of the laws of the Torah no longer apply. Thus it becomes acceptable for a Christian to wear mixed fibers, make graven images, and allow women to be teachers—but no longer acceptable are polygamy, concubinage, or "an eye for an eye".

What is this if not moral relativism?

Post by “Cassius” of November 30, 2021 at 10:00 AM

I completely agree and this is a subject that needs lots of attention.

I think it's quite proper to refer to "laws of nature" and there's a lot of that in Epicurus/Lucretius if I recall correctly, but they were talking generally in terms of physics. They were also talking carefully about the issue of "properties" and "events" or "incidents" (I hate the word "accidents" as I think its connotations make it misleading in this context) and I think most modern discussions skip over that without realizing the important implications.

And then there's the biblical "slave of the weak and beggarly elements" reference which also is a point of connection where we can show how the Epicureans were directly translating their

physics into implications for human life.

But I think you're exactly right. There is this long "laws of nature of of nature's god" that appears in even in Jefferson that is being used to establish the viewpoint that social / political conventions were themselves written by "Nature," and most of those implications I think go way too far.

This is a part of the subject of justice that really cries out for expansion to clarify where Epicurus was going.

Post by “Cassius” of December 1, 2021 at 5:51 PM

Continuing to edit the podcast I see that I made reference to this quote from Thomas Jefferson in reference to justice as viewed by regular people as against experts:

- Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr, August 10, 1787

“He who made us would have been a pitiful bungler if he had made the rules of our moral conduct a matter of science. For one man of science, there are thousands who are not. What would have become of them? Man was destined for society. His morality, therefore, was to be formed to this object. He was endowed with a sense of right and wrong, merely relative to this. This sense is as much a part of his Nature, as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling; it is the true foundation of morality, and not the [beautiful], truth, &c., as fanciful writers have imagined. The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree. It may be strengthened by exercise, as may any particular limb of the body. This sense is submitted, indeed, in some degree, to the guidance of reason; but it is a small stock which is required for this: even a less one than what we call common sense. State a moral case to a plowman and a professor. The former will decide it as well, & often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules.”

Post by “Cassius” of December 2, 2021 at 8:12 AM

Episode 98 of the Lucretius Today podcast is now available. In this episode, we tackle the fascinating subject of the Epicurean view of Justice. As always we invite your comments and questions, and we will try to incorporate them in future episodes.

Post by “Cassius” of December 2, 2021 at 8:25 AM

Another citation in the body of the podcast is to this quote from Cicero's "Republic" - in which he is stating the standard Platonic/Aristotelian view of justice, to which Epicurus objected:

Quote

True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting; it summons to duty by its commands, and averts from wrong-doing by its prohibitions. And it does not lay its commands or prohibitions upon good men in vain, though neither have any effect on the wicked. It is a sin to try to to sic alter this law, nor is it allowable to attempt to repeal any part of it, and it is impossible to abolish it entirely. We cannot be freed from its obligations by senate or people, and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it. And there will not be different laws at Rome and at Athens, or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and all times, and there will be one master and ruler, that is, God, over us all, for he is the author of this law, its promulgator, and its enforcing judge. Whoever is disobedient is fleeing from himself and denying his human nature, and by reason of this very fact he will suffer the worst penalties, even if he escapes what is commonly considered punishment.

I'll look for an exact cite and link so this can be read in context.

Here is an article that discusses the issue:
https://www.academia.edu/43419632/3_Sto...as_Right_Reason

Quote

In De Re Publica [On the Commonwealth] 3.33, on behalf of the Stoic Laelius, Cicero left for posterity an unsurpassed definition of natural law:

True law (lex) is Right Reason (recta ratio) in agreement with nature (naturae congruens); ... it summons to duty by its command, and averts from wrongdoing by its prohibitions. ... We cannot be freed from its obligations by senate or by people, and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it. And there will not be different laws at Rome and at Athens, or different laws now and in future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be one master and ruler, that is, God, over us all, for

he is the author of this law, its promulgator, and its enforcing judge. Whoever is disobedient is fleeing from himself and denying his human nature, and by reason of this very fact he will suffer the worst penalties, even if he escapes what is commonly considered punishment.

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 16, 2021 at 11:50 AM

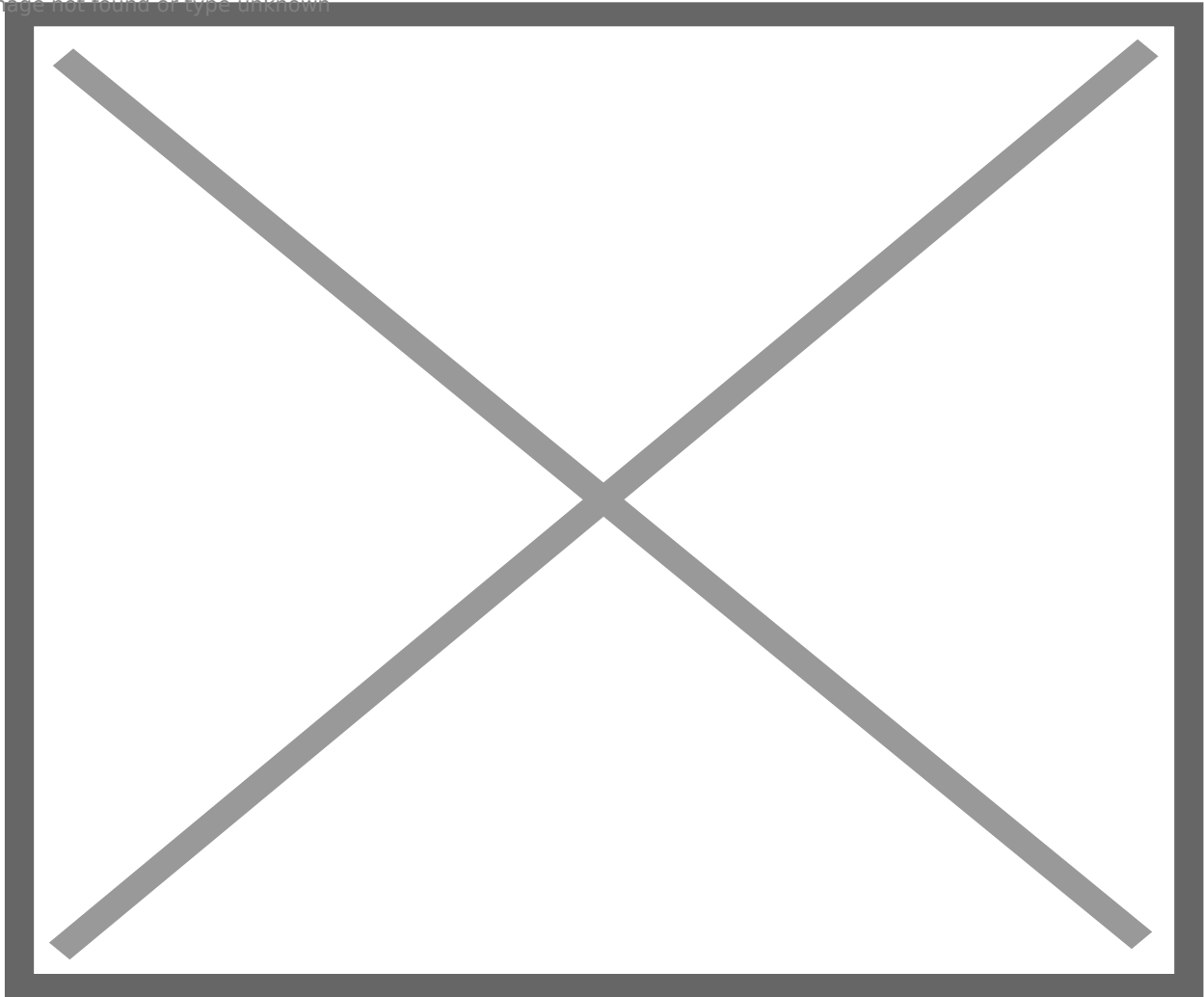
I listened to this podcast last night. In response to the short discussion on torture:

Quote

Torture is one of the most extreme forms of human violence, resulting in both physical and psychological consequences. It has been used for thousands of years and it is still occurring throughout much of the world. The right to freedom from torture is a universally recognized human right and one of the foundations of international law. Torture, as well as cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, is banned in all times and cannot be justified.

The most precise definition of torture is outlined in the [*UN Convention Against Torture, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(CAT\)*](#), which defines it as “Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.”

Image not found or type unknown



[5 Reasons Why Torture Does Not Work and Can Never Be Justified](#)

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