

Episode One Hundred One - Corollaries to the Doctrines - Part One

Post by "Cassius" of December 17, 2021 at 6:09 PM

Welcome to Episode One Hundred One 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 move past the issue of the relationship between virtue and pleasure and we discuss several important corollaries of Epicurean doctrine.

We have a special shortened edition today due to the year-end holidays, but we'll be back soon with our full length episodes. For today, let's join Martin reading today's text:

[55] XVII. I will concisely explain what are the corollaries of these sure and well grounded opinions. People make no mistake about the standards of good and evil themselves, that is about pleasure or pain, but err in these matters through ignorance of the means by which these results are to be brought about. Now we admit that mental pleasures and pains spring from bodily pleasures and pains; so I allow what you alleged just now, that any of our school who differ from this opinion are out of court; and indeed I see there are many such, but unskilled thinkers. I grant that although mental pleasure brings us joy and mental pain brings us trouble, yet each feeling takes its rise in the body and is dependent on the body, though it does not follow that the pleasures and pains of the mind do not greatly surpass those of the body. With the body indeed we can perceive only what is present to us at the moment, but with the mind the past and future also. For granting that we feel just as great pain when our body is in pain, still mental pain may be very greatly intensified if we imagine some everlasting and unbounded evil to be menacing us. And we may apply the same argument to pleasure, so that it is

increased by the absence of such fears.

[56] By this time so much at least is plain, that the intensest pleasure or the intensest annoyance felt in the mind exerts more influence on the happiness or wretchedness of life than either feeling, when present for an equal space of time in the body.

Post by “Cassius” of December 22, 2021 at 12:36 PM

Episode One Hundred One of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. We have a special shortened edition today due to the year-end holidays, but we'll be back soon with our full length episodes.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/48025994>

Post by “Don” of December 23, 2021 at 8:34 AM

I believe reason that the Epicureans emphasized both physical and mental pleasures was to clearly differentiate themselves from the Cyrenaics who, as I understand, didn't put any value on mental pleasures.

Post by “Cassius” of December 23, 2021 at 11:39 AM

Yes but I would say "part" of the reason - not the whole thing. That's probably implicit in what you wrote though!

Post by “Cassius” of December 23, 2021 at 12:30 PM

I have more time now to expand..... I do think in addition to distinguishing with the Cyrenic views this is an important part of an Epicurean response to why we would not just sit in our

caves and eat and drink and sleep.... Because there is such a large world of "mental" pleasures that simply can't be achieved unless we get out and work at them.

Post by “Godfrey” of December 23, 2021 at 1:21 PM

Just to complicate the discussion.... 😊

The statement was made that bodily feelings exist only in the present but mental feelings can be both anticipated and remembered. To my understanding, the body also has memory and anticipation of feelings. As one example, childhood traumas can unconsciously affect a person's health in numerous ways which can last a lifetime.

Although perhaps not available in Epicurus' day, current information indicates that the body and mind are intricately intertwined to the point where it can be difficult to separate mental and physical feelings. However this just reinforces Epicurus' contention that the mind and/or soul is physical. Going into more detail is only worthwhile to the extent that it increases one's pleasure!

Post by “Cassius” of December 23, 2021 at 3:40 PM

I think Godfrey your comment applies in a German way as well. The whole division into mental and bodily makes sense to us on a superficial level, but it's harder to unwind when you dig deeper. That's much like the discussion of free will / determinism .

Maybe in fact it is much more important for us to have a coherent "big picture," even if on a "superficial" level, since that's the level at which we generally function day to day and moment to moment. Rather than worrying about using words technical enough to satisfy a lifelong scientific expert who understands all the mechanisms at cellular level.

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 23, 2021 at 5:12 PM

I just listened to this podcast. Some thoughts...

If you feel pain in your body from an illness...and not knowing what it is, because it is undiagnosed...and in addition if you fear death greatly, then the mental fear will make the pain much worse.

When you feel sexual pleasure in your body, but if you feel ashamed about it, the pleasure will be muted if you fear that God will punish you for it.