

Episode One Hundred Nine - The Epicurean View of Friendship

Post by "Cassius" of February 11, 2022 at 7:45 PM

Welcome to Episode One Hundred Nine 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. We have now completed a long but important section stressing the importance of the Epicurean emphasis on Epistemology and Natural Science, and today we turn to section 65 on Friendship, which will probably take us several sessions to complete.

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

[65] XX. One topic remains, which is of prime importance for this discussion, that relating to friendship, which you declare will cease to exist, if pleasure be the supreme good, yet Epicurus makes this declaration concerning it, that of all the aids to happiness procured for us by wisdom, none is greater than friendship, none more fruitful, none more delightful. Nor in fact did he sanction this view by his language alone, but much more by his life and actions and character. And the greatness of friendship is made evident by the imaginary stories of the ancients, in which, numerous and diversified as they are, and reaching back to extreme antiquity, scarce three pairs of friends are mentioned, so that beginning with Theseus you end with Orestes. But in truth within the limits of a single school, and that restricted in numbers, what great flocks of friends did Epicurus secure, and how great was that harmony of affection wherein they all agreed! And his example is followed by the Epicureans in our day also. But let

us return to our theme; there is no need to speak of persons.

[66] I see then that friendship has been discussed by our school in three ways. Some, denying that the pleasures which affect our friends are in themselves as desirable to us as those we desire for ourselves, a view which certain persons think shakes the foundation of friendship, still defend their position, and in my opinion easily escape from their difficulties. For they affirm that friendship, like the virtues of which we spoke already, cannot be dissociated from pleasure. Now since isolation and a life without friends abound in treacheries and alarms, reason herself advises us to procure friendships, by the acquisition of which the spirit is strengthened, and cannot then be severed from the hope of achieving pleasures.

[67] And as enmity, spitefulness, scorn, are opposed to pleasures, so friendships are not only the truest promoters, but are actually efficient causes of pleasures, as well to a man's friends as to himself; and friends not only have the immediate enjoyment of these pleasures but are elate with hope as regards future and later times. Now because we can by no means apart from friendship preserve the agreeableness of life strong and unbroken, nor further can we maintain friendship itself unless we esteem our friends in the same degree as ourselves; on that account this principle is acted on in friendship, and so friendship is linked with pleasure. Truly we both rejoice at the joy of our friends as much as at our own joy, and we are equally pained by their vexations.

Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2022 at 8:57 AM

Vatican Collection:

VS28 - We must not approve either those who are always ready for friendship, or those who hang back, but for friendship's sake we must even run risks.

VS78. The noble soul occupies itself with wisdom and friendship; of these, the one is a mortal good, the other immortal.

Diogenes Laertius:

[122] They hold that faults are not all of equal gravity, that health is a blessing to some, but indifferent to others, that courage does not come by nature, but by a calculation of advantage. That friendship too has practical needs as its motive: one must indeed lay its foundations (for we sow the ground too for the sake of crops), but it is formed and maintained by means of community of life among those who have reached the fullness of pleasure.

[PD27](#). Of all the things which wisdom acquires to produce the blessedness of the complete life, far the greatest is the possession of friendship.

[PD28](#)

The same knowledge that makes one confident that nothing dreadful is eternal or long-lasting also recognizes, in the face of these limited evils, the security afforded by friendship. Note: The translation given is by Eugene O'Connor from "The Essential Epicurus." Bailey's version is: "The same conviction which has given us confidence that there is nothing terrible that lasts forever, or even for long, has also seen the protection of friendship most fully completed in the limited evils of this life."

Post by "Cassius" of February 13, 2022 at 9:03 AM

This material on friendship is going to take at least two and possibly three sessions to cover, and I wonder if we have had so many comments raised about our last session on skepticism that we need to go slow in starting this session and see if there are any mop-up issues on skepticism to cover first. If you're reading this before Episode 109 is recorded on 2/13, and you have more issues on skepticism you'd like to see addressed, go back to [the thread for 108](#) and let us know those comments there.

Post by "Cassius" of February 13, 2022 at 11:20 AM

@smoothiekiwi once again succeeded in gaining multiple mentions in today's podcast. It's going to take some time to edit, and as usual we didn't make it too far in discussing the new topic (friendship) but there's a lot to cover and I think despite the twists and turns of the discussion that it will be useful to listen to and consider.

Post by "Cassius" of February 13, 2022 at 11:45 AM

Oh I am not sure that this will survive the editing phase but I should also mentioned that at first I thought Joshua was saying something not entirely positive about a technique of Don's, but after I got myself oriented it was entirely positive, so I don't want Don to have a heart attack when he hears the reference 😊

Post by “Don” of February 13, 2022 at 12:38 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Oh I am not sure that this will survive the editing phase but I should also mentioned that at first I thought Joshua was saying something not entirely positive about a technique of Don's, but after I got myself oriented it was entirely positive, so I don't want Don to have a heart attack when he hears the reference 😊

Well, I'll look forward to hearing that 😊 Now, you have to leave it in!

Post by “Cassius” of February 17, 2022 at 3:26 PM

Editing is finally coming along. One of the highlights of this episode is Martin taking Torquatus to task for his citation to Theseus and Orestes!

Post by “Cassius” of February 17, 2022 at 5:13 PM

Episode 109 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. In this week's episode we discuss the Epicurean View of Friendship:

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/48777070>

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of February 17, 2022 at 5:20 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2396-episode-one-hundred-nine-the-epicurean-view-of-friendship/>

Seriously, how are you all able to record and publish these episodes so quickly? I barely manage to listen to one episode each week- they're heavy stuff, and it's not really possible to concentrate on such deep philosophical questions while e.g. cleaning my room. So I owe a lot of respect to all participants, and especially Cassius, that you're able to publish this podcast so frequently. Thanks!

Post by “Marco” of February 18, 2022 at 4:30 AM

I would be very careful with Cicero here. You can reason yourself into a swamp, I think of Zeno and his riddles. Trust your senses, even with friendship and pleasure, but stay careful.

Post by “Don” of February 18, 2022 at 2:15 PM

Thanks for the positive shout-out regarding my "scatter shot" translation proclivities 😊 I really do think it's necessary sometimes to get at the nuances of the original languages.

Post by “Cassius” of February 18, 2022 at 7:45 PM

I suppose I have been around too many hunters or something so when I heard the term "scattershot" i was immediately taken back as I interpret the term as generally negative. I should have had more confidence in Joshua and I wouldn't have been alarmed and had to backtrack. 😊