

Episode One Hundred Ten - The Epicurean View of Friendship (Part 2)

Post by "Cassius" of February 19, 2022 at 2:51 PM

Welcome to Episode One Hundred Ten 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 complete the section on Friendship.

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

[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.

[68] Therefore the wise man will entertain the same feeling for his friend as for himself, and the very same efforts which he would undergo to procure his own pleasure, these he will undergo to procure that of his friend. And all that we said of the virtues to shew how they always have their root in pleasures, must be said over about friendship. For it was nobly declared by Epicurus, almost in these words: "It is one and the same feeling which strengthens the mind against the fear of eternal or lasting evil, and which clearly sees that in this actual span of life the protection afforded by friendship is the most powerful of all."

[69] There are however certain Epicureans who are somewhat more nervous in facing the reproaches of your school, but are still shrewd enough ; these are afraid that if we suppose friendship to be desirable with a view to our own pleasure, friendship may appear to be altogether maimed, as it were. So they say that while the earliest meetings and associations and tendencies towards the establishment of familiarity do arise on account of pleasure, yet when experience has gradually produced intimacy, then affection ripens to such a degree that though no interest be served by the friendship, yet friends are loved in themselves and for their own sake. Again, if by familiarity we get to love localities, shrines, cities, the exercise ground, the park, dogs, horses, and exhibitions either of gymnastics or of combats with beasts, how much more easily and properly may this come about when our familiarity is with human beings?

[70] Men are found to say that there is a certain treaty of alliance which binds wise men not to esteem their friends less than they do themselves. Such alliance we not only understand to be possible, but often see it realized, and it is plain that nothing can be found more conducive to pleasantness of life than union of this kind. From all these different views we may conclude that not only are the principles of friendship left unconstrained, if the supreme good be made to reside in pleasure, but that without this view it is entirely impossible to discover a basis for friendship.

Post by "Cassius" of February 22, 2022 at 7:44 PM

I am in the editing phase and may make a couple of comments about this episode:

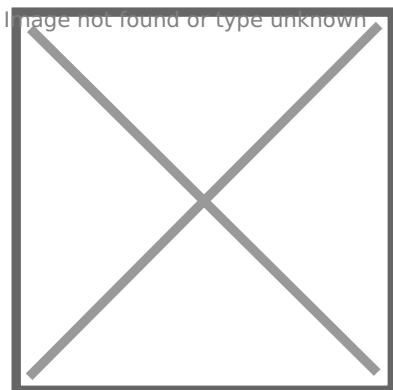
Probably around the 25 minute mark Joshua brings up the "Peace and Safety" phrase and we discuss for a few moments: "Is safety a pleasure or a tool for pleasure?"

Sometimes it seems like we are splitting hairs on words and sometimes these distinctions seem important. Probably the uncertainty as to which of the two it is (splitting hairs or important) is something that we could resolve if we thought it through (?)

Post by "Don" of February 22, 2022 at 9:29 PM

I'm not sure where you went with that whole "Peace and safety" discussion, and I'm curious to hear what the verdict was on pleasure or instrumental good. But on the idea of its being an Epicurean slogan, I don't see any evidence that this was a catchphrase of the Epicureans in Thessaloniki or elsewhere. This idea comes only from DeWitt as far as I can tell with no more evidence than the words Εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια "Peace and safety" in I Thessalonians 5:3. I don't doubt that Epicureans valued peace and safety over war and insecurity, just like everyone else! But I don't see any reason to think this was a regular saying among the Epicurean community. I'd be happy to be proven wrong. You can even see some of my early posts on this forum included it because of DeWitt's comments. But, after looking at the source (I Thessalonians 5:3), I stopped using it. I've seen some papers that point out that it doesn't even have to be read as a slogan or phrase. It's simply "while they are saying 'peace' and 'safety'..." and a number of commentators make a strong case that the actual people that Paul is referring to are the Romans and their imposed peace and security of the Pax Romana. While the Romans are saying peace and safety, the Lord is going to come back and smite them all... So be ready... Or some religious fantasy fever dream like that.

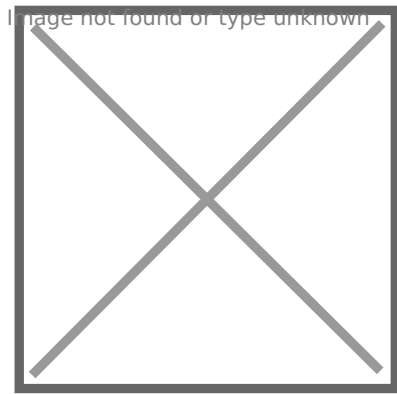
See also:



[1 Thessalonians 5 :: King James Version \(KJV\)](#)

1 Thessalonians 5 - But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

www.blueletterbible.org



["Peace, Security, and Labor Pains in 1 Thessalonians 5.3," Leaven 23.1 \(2015\): 37-42.](#)

In this brief essay, I present the case for reading "peace" (eirene) and "security" (asphaleia) as two separate but complementary qualities...

www.academia.edu

Post by "Cassius" of February 22, 2022 at 9:43 PM

Looks like editing is about to be complete so the discussion will be up soon.

Another point of note to which I give Joshua the credit is the analogy between Torquatus finishing his presentation with a "hard case" (that of friendship) with Lucretius finishing book six with another hard case (the plague of Athens and so many people dying).

The reason I post this is that if there is any merit in that analogy (and I think there is) then what we have in next week's episode - Torquatus' closing and climactic summary of the merit of Epicurus - is what book six and or the poem as a whole SHOULD HAVE included at the end as a summary.

So the next time someone complains about the ending of Lucretius, I intend to point them to this ending of Torquatus for the final summary.

But that's NEXT week.

Post by "Cassius" of February 22, 2022 at 10:02 PM

Episode 110 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. In this week's episode we complete the discussion of the Epicurean View of Friendship:

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/48837974>

Post by “Joshua” of February 22, 2022 at 10:55 PM

I don't think we lingered long on the "peace and safety" bit, and I can't remember making any strong claims about it. The context of that passing reference was in the relationship between friendship and security--and security is certainly peppered all over the key texts.

Post by “Don” of February 23, 2022 at 7:03 PM

I mentioned this elsewhere on the forum, but I'll post here as well. To me, the role of friendship has evolved since Hellenistic times. I think that people were just as committed to their friends then as they are now. However, there was much more of a reliance on one's friends - one's philoi φίλοι - for one's well-being back then. There was no "social safety net" or institutions for elder care or hospitals. Without friends, you were up the proverbial creek. Friends are still today a necessary component of a pleasurable life but I'm not sure they full the same life or death niche they did 2,000 years ago. I think that's one of the reasons why Epicurus and Torquatus et al. placed such a high importance on friendship in the texts.

Post by “Don” of February 25, 2022 at 2:16 PM

I found this fragment of Menander that illustrates the point I was trying to make in #7 above:

Quote from Menander

The lightest of all ills is bothering

You—poverty! And what is that? One friend

Who helps can medicate it easily.

Source: <https://archive.org/details/menand...ge/137/mode/2up>

I just realized that Menander and Epicurus were contemporaries in Athens, although Menander was (according to Wikipedia) a student of Theophrastus so they would not have hung out together but could very well have known each other:

[Menander](#): c. 342/41 - c. 290 BCE

Epicurus: 341-270 BCE

Post by “Joshua” of February 25, 2022 at 3:51 PM

They drilled in the same cohort for the requisite two (I think?) years of military training! Menander is the author of one of the epigrams in the Greek anthology;

Quote

Hail, ye twin-born sons of Neocles, of whom the
one saved his country from slavery the other from folly.

The former was Themistocles, and the latter was Epicurus.