

# **Episode 183 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 35 - Chapter 14 - The New Virtues 06 - Honesty**

**Post by "Cassius" of July 14, 2023 at 10:27 PM**

Welcome to Episode 183 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. 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 you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics. We are now in the process of a series of podcasts intended to provide a general overview of Epicurean philosophy based on the organizational structure employed by Norman DeWitt in his book "Epicurus and His Philosophy."

This week we continue our discussion of Chapter 14, entitled "The New Virtues."

## **Chapter XIV - The New Virtues**

- Honesty
- Faith
- Love of Mankind
- Friendship
- Suavity
- Considerateness
- Hope
- Attitude Toward the Present
- Gratitude
- Gratitude to Teachers
- Gratitude to Nature
- Gratitude To Friends
- Fruits Of Gratitude

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/56183763>

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**Post by "Cassius" of July 16, 2023 at 6:14 AM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3197-episode-183-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-35-chapter-14-the-new-virtues-06-ho/>

The section on Honesty which will be our focus in this episode contains some very interesting commentary and footnotes by DeWitt.

One example is that DeWitt infers that Philodemus may have been a partisan of Mark Antony in the Civil Wars, which would apparently be different than the position taken by Atticus.

DeWitt gives two footnote references; this is the second, from Cicero Phil. 2.17.42. : Philodemus is not named here but the references to someone instructing him on declamation in another man's villa -

#### [Quote from Ciceo - Yonge](#)

42Although the thing that struck me with most astonishment of all was, that you should venture to make mention of inheritances, when you yourself had not received the inheritance of your own father. XVII. And was it in order to collect all these arguments, O you most senseless of men, that you spent so many days in practising declamation in another man's villa? Although, indeed, (as your most intimate friends usually say,) you are in the habit of declaiming, not for the purpose of whetting your genius, but of working off the effects of wine. And, indeed, you employ a master to teach you jokes, a man appointed by your own vote and that of your boon companions; a rhetorician, whom you have allowed to say whatever he pleased against you, a thoroughly facetious gentleman; but there are plenty of materials for speaking against you and against your friends. But just see now what a difference there is between you and your grandfather. He used with great deliberation to bring forth arguments advantageous to the cause he was advocating; you pour forth in a hurry the sentiments which you have been taught by another.

The other note is a reference to Antony's willingness to receive criticism:

#### [Plutarch, Antony, chapter 24](#)

DeWitt is referencing Philodemus' On Rhetoric and it looks to me like it would be necessary to be much more familiar with the fragments of Philodemus than I am to assess whether there are more specific connections to Antony.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of July 16, 2023 at 6:35 AM**

Here is DeWitt's footnote as to Horace describing Virgil, Plotius, and Varus as candid men. I see there is a reference to Mark Antony here too, as well as the memorable line: "**While I am in**

***my senses, nothing can I prefer to a pleasant friend."***

[HORACE - SATIRE V.](#)

*He describes a certain journey of his from Rome to Brundisium with great pleasantry.*

Having left mighty Rome, Aricia received me in but a middling inn: Heliodorus the rhetorician, most learned in the Greek language, was my fellow-traveller: thence we proceeded to Forum-Appi, stuffed with sailors and surly landlords. This stage, but one for better travellers than we, being laggard we divided into two; the Appian way is less tiresome to bad travelers. Here I, on account of the water, which was most vile, proclaim war against my belly, waiting not without impatience for my companions while at supper. Now the night was preparing to spread her shadows upon the earth, and to display the constellations in the heavens. Then our slaves began to be liberal of their abuse to the watermen, and the watermen to our slaves. "Here bring to." "You are stowing in hundreds; hold, now sure there is enough." Thus while the fare is paid, and the mule fastened a whole hour is passed away. The cursed gnats, and frogs of the fens, drive off repose. While the waterman and a passenger, well-soaked with plenty of thick wine, vie with one another in singing the praises of their absent mistresses: at length the passenger being fatigued, begins to sleep; and the lazy waterman ties the halter of the mule, turned out a-grazing, to a stone, and snores, lying flat on his back. And now the day approached, when we saw the boat made no way; until a choleric fellow, one of the passengers, leaps out of the boat, and drubs the head and sides of both mule and waterman with a willow cudgel. At last we were scarcely set ashore at the fourth hour. We wash our faces and hands in thy water, O Feronia. Then, having dined we crawled on three miles; and arrive under Anxur, which is built up on rocks that look white to a great distance. Maecenas was to come here, as was the excellent Cocceius. Both sent ambassadors on matters of great importance, having been accustomed to reconcile friends at variance. Here, having got sore eyes, I was obliged to use the black ointment. In the meantime came Maecenas, and Cocceius, and Fonteius Capito along with them, a man of perfect polish, and intimate with Mark Antony, no man more so.

Without regret we passed Fundi, where Aufidius Luscus was praetor, laughing at the honors of that crazy scribe, his praetexta, laticlave, and pan of incense. At our next stage, being weary, we tarry in the city of the Mamurrae, Murena complimenting us with his house, and Capito with his kitchen.

The next day arises, by much the most agreeable to all: for Plotius, and Varius, and Virgil met us at Sinuessa; souls more candid ones than which the world never produced, nor is there a person in/the world more bound to them than myself. Oh what embraces, and what transports were there! While I am in my senses, nothing can I prefer to a pleasant friend. The village, which is next adjoining to the bridge of Campania, accommodated us with lodging [at night];

and the public officers with such a quantity of fuel and salt as they are obliged to [by law]. From this place the mules deposited their pack-saddles at Capua betimes [in the morning]. Maecenas goes to play [at tennis]; but I and Virgil to our repose: for to play at tennis is hurtful to weak eyes and feeble constitutions.

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It would be interesting to trace the history of these three and see what DeWitt is alluding to in referring to them as "a trio still Epicurean *at that date*."

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### **Post by "Joshua" of July 16, 2023 at 11:24 AM**

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act 5, Scene 2, on the difficulty of frank speech:

CLEOPATRA

I dreamt there was an emperor Antony.

O, such another sleep, that I might see

But such another man.

DOLABELLA If it might please you—

CLEOPATRA

His face was as the heavens, and therein stuck

A sun and moon, which kept their course and

lighted

The little O, the Earth.

DOLABELLA Most sovereign creature—

CLEOPATRA

His legs bestrid the ocean, his reared arm

Crested the world. His voice was propertyed

As all the tunèd spheres, and that to friends;  
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,  
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,  
There was no winter in 't; an autumn 'twas  
That grew the more by reaping. His delights  
Were dolphin-like; they showed his back above  
The element they lived in. In his livery  
Walked crowns and crownets; realms and islands  
were  
As plates dropped from his pocket.

DOLABELLA Cleopatra—

CLEOPATRA

Think you there was, or might be, such a man  
As this I dreamt of?

DOLABELLA Gentle madam, no.

CLEOPATRA

You lie up to the hearing of the gods!

But if there be nor ever were one such,  
It's past the size of dreaming. Nature wants stuff  
To vie strange forms with fancy, yet t' imagine  
An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,  
Condemning shadows quite.

DOLABELLA Hear me, good madam.

Your loss is as yourself, great; and you bear it  
As answering to the weight. Would I might never

O'ertake pursued success but I do feel,  
By the rebound of yours, a grief that smites  
My very heart at root.

CLEOPATRA I thank you, sir.

Know you what Caesar [Augustus] means to do with me?

DOLABELLA

I am loath to tell you what I would you knew.

CLEOPATRA

Nay, pray you, sir.

DOLABELLA Though he be honorable—

CLEOPATRA He'll lead me, then, in triumph.

DOLABELLA Madam, he will. I know 't.

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## Post by “Joshua” of July 16, 2023 at 11:41 AM

Show Notes:

Footnote 22, and why it's easy to relate good news. Dewitt cites *Exordium* by the Athenian statesman Demosthenes:

[Demosthenes, Exordia, exordium 54](#)

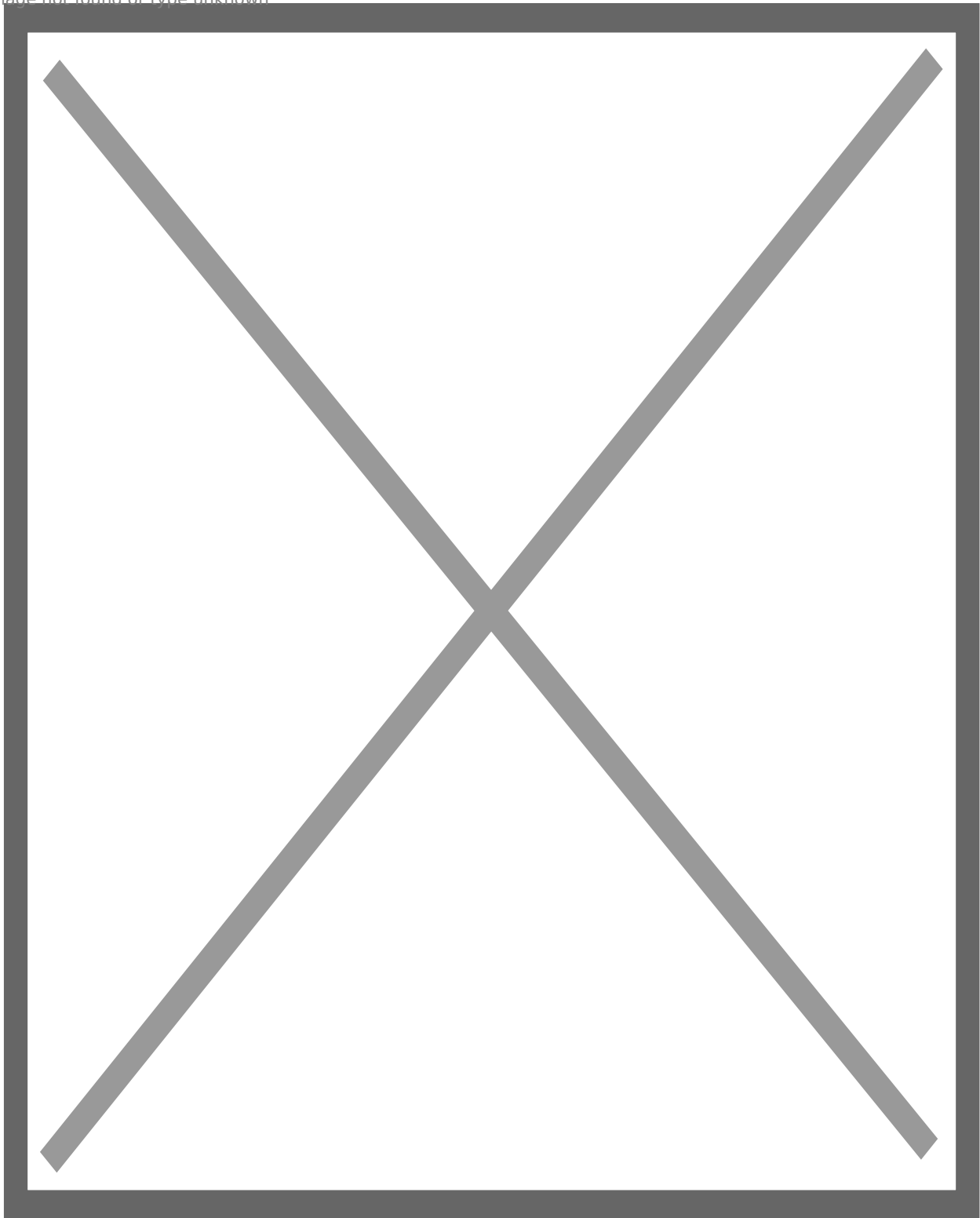
Quote

It is just and right and important, men of Athens, that we too should exercise care, as you are accustomed, that our relations with the gods shall be piously maintained. Therefore our commission has been duly discharged for you, for we have sacrificed to Zeus the Saviour and to Athena and to Victory, and these sacrifices have been auspicious and salutary for you. We have also sacrificed to Persuasion and to the Mother of the Gods and to Apollo, and here also we had favorable omens. And the

sacrifices made to the other gods portended for you security and stability and prosperity and safety. Do you, therefore, accept the blessings which the gods bestow.

The Grey-Rock method; when honesty is not the best policy

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[When Dealing With a Narcissist, the “Gray Rock” Approach Might Help](#)

Acting dull and uninteresting can undermine a narcissist’s attempts to control.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3197-episode-183-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-35-chapter-14-the-new-virtues-06-ho/>

Lucy Hutchinson on why she translated Lucretius, in her letter to the Earl of Anglesey

[Full text | Lucy Hutchinson's letter to Lord Anglesey \(1675\)](#)

Quote

So I beseech your Lordship to reward my obedience, by indulging me the further honor to preserve, wherever your Lordship shall dispose this booke, this record with it, that I abhorre all the Atheismes and impieties in it, and translated it only out of youthfull curiositie, to understand things I heard so much discourse of at second hand, but without the least inclination to propagate any of the wicked pernicious doctrines in it.

On [Shooting the Messenger](#);

Quote

An early literary citing of "killing the messenger" is in Plutarch's 'Lives': "The first messenger that gave notice of [the Roman general] Lucullus' coming was so far from pleasing [the Armenian king] Tigranes that he had his head cut off for his pains; and no man dared to bring further information. Without any intelligence at all, Tigranes sat while war was already blazing around him, giving ear only to those who flattered him".

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### Post by “Joshua” of July 16, 2023 at 11:46 AM

VS62 also relates to the issue of honesty and frankness of speech, and when it is best to hold back; *"If the anger of parents against their children is justified, it is quite pointless for the children to resist it and to fail to ask forgiveness. If the anger is not justified but is unreasonable, it is folly for an irrational child to appeal to someone deaf to appeals and not to try to turn it aside in other directions by a display of good will."*

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### Post by “Cassius” of July 16, 2023 at 11:51 AM

Great notes - thank you Joshua!!!

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## Post by “Joshua” of July 17, 2023 at 8:09 PM

Horace, on his father;

Quote

If my character is flawed by a few minor faults, but is otherwise decent and moral, if you can point out only a few scattered blemishes on an otherwise immaculate surface, if no one can accuse me of greed, or of prurience, or of profligacy, if I live a virtuous life, free of defilement (pardon, for a moment, my self-praise), and if I am to my friends a good friend, my father deserves all the credit... As it is now, he deserves from me unstinting gratitude and praise. I could never be ashamed of such a father, nor do I feel any need, as many people do, to apologize for being a freedman's son. Satires 1.6.65-92

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## Post by “Cassius” of July 22, 2023 at 6:41 AM

Episode 183 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available!

This week: Honesty!

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/56183763>

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## Post by “Don” of July 23, 2023 at 11:23 AM

I believe I remember ya'll discussing the "when in their cups" quote from DeWitt. FWIW, here's my take on that characteristics of the sage:

[Epicurean Sage - Living Unknown](#)

The Epicureans are said to have encouraged lathe biosas, living unknown or not calling attention to oneself. This is a controversial fragment, but Diogenes...

sites.google.com

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3197-episode-183-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-35-chapter-14-the-new-virtues-06-ho/>

## **Even when drunk, the wise one will not talk nonsense or act silly. (119)**

Hicks: Nor will he drivel, when drunken: so Epicurus says in the Symposium.

Yonge: Nor will he ever indulge in drunkenness, says Epicurus, in his Banquet,

Mensch: He will not talk nonsense when drunk.

Is the emphasis here on the drunkenness or the "drivel" (to talk stupidly or carelessly). Let's check the original text: οὐδέ μὴν ληρήσειν ἐν μέθῃ ...

- ληρήσειν "be foolish or silly, speak or act foolishly"
- ἐν μέθῃ "when drunk" (literally, "in strong drink, in drunkenness")
  - "Not, truly, will they act or speak silly in drunkenness..."

So, technically, [from my perspective] the wise one can get drunk, but they need to be careful how they act. The fact that this characteristic is an excerpt from Epicurus's *Symposium* ( *Συμπόσιον*) which is a drinking party, is interesting. Chances are attendees were getting drunk and acting silly. To me, Epicurus is saying, "Go ahead and drink, but, *Paian Anax*, don't act the fool!" (According to Norman DeWitt, Epicurus liked to pepper his writings with names of the gods, Paian Anax was one of his favorites.)