

Planning for Discussion of "Tusculan Disputations" (Lucretius Today Podcast)

Post by "Cassius" of January 24, 2025 at 7:17 AM

A discussion guide for the Epicurean sections of Tusculan Disputations is here:

Thread

[Episode 271 - TD01 - Understanding Epicurus Through Tusculan Disputations](#)

Welcome to Episode 271 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most 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 we discuss this and all of our...



Cassius

March 3, 2025 at 10:56 AM

Please feel free to make suggestions for additional citations within TD that are relevant to Epicurus but may not mention Epicurus's name specifically.

Here is a bullet-point list of sections within Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* where Epicurean ideas are discussed, along with brief summaries:

- **Book I, Sections 18-21**

- Cicero critiques the Epicurean view that death is not to be feared because sensation ceases with death. He argues that even if death entails the loss of sensation, this does not necessarily mean it is not an evil.

- **Book I, Section 33**

- Epicurus' position that death is "nothing to us" is revisited. Cicero questions whether this truly removes the fear of death, as he believes that the anticipation of

future suffering can still be disturbing.

- **Book II, Sections 9-11**

- Cicero challenges the Epicurean view that pleasure is the highest good, arguing that virtue must be pursued for its own sake. He asserts that if pleasure were the highest good, moral excellence would be subordinated to bodily enjoyment.

- **Book III, Sections 17-22**

- Cicero critiques the Epicurean claim that pain is the greatest evil, arguing that a wise person can endure pain with fortitude. He asserts that mental distress caused by vice is a greater evil than bodily pain.

- **Book IV, Sections 6-7**

- The Epicurean approach to emotions, particularly their attempt to eliminate mental disturbances (*ataraxia*), is examined. Cicero argues that their focus on eliminating fear and anxiety does not sufficiently account for the role of reason and virtue in emotional well-being.

- **Book V, Sections 29-32**

- The Epicurean notion that friendship is based on mutual utility and the pursuit of pleasure is addressed. Cicero contends that true friendship must be based on virtue rather than a calculation of benefits.

Cicero generally critiques Epicureanism as inadequate for achieving true virtue and happiness, advocating instead for a Stoic or Platonic approach to ethics.

Post by “Cassius” of March 14, 2025 at 8:30 AM

I am seeing lots of discussion among commentators about Cicero writing this at a time of great stress for him. I am not very familiar with the history of the times, and what happened with Cicero AFTER he wrote Tusculan Disputations.

I was about to get the impression that he wrote these just before dying, and that he was in a "I'm giving up state" - but I see a LOT happened after he wrote these and before his death.

I found this video that shows how much was going on in the last couple of years of his life. Sounds like he was highly engaged and fighting right up til the end, so it would probably be a mistake to think that he had already "given up" and had totally "retreated" to philosophy when he wrote these books. As I understand it none of the philosophical works mention the death of Caesar, presumably meaning they were written before that occurred, and the events in this video happened:

<https://youtu.be/g8DBd3SkuS8>