

Episode 309 - TD37 - The Error of Basing Happiness On The Alleged Divinity Of The Human Mind

Post by “Cassius” of November 21, 2025 at 4:37 PM

Welcome to Episode 309 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 podcast episodes.

We'll pick up this week at Section 11 of Part 5 of Tusculan Disputations. Here Cicero's student points out that Cicero has been contradicting himself in his own books as to the significance of the different positions on whether virtue alone is sufficient for happiness.

[Cicero - Tusculan Disputations - EpicureanFriends Handbook](#)

The heart of this argument is going to reveal how the line of non-Epicurean Greeks including Pythagorus/Socrates/Plato and the others listed here insist on finding the good only through their divinely-ordained reasoning of the mind:

Quote

But the human mind, being derived from the divine reason, can be compared with nothing but with the Deity itself, if I may be allowed the expression. This, then, if it is improved, and when its perception is so preserved as not to be blinded by errors, becomes a perfect understanding, that is to say, absolute reason, which is the very same as virtue. And if everything is happy which wants nothing, and is complete and perfect in its kind, and that is the peculiar lot of virtue; certainly all who are possessed of virtue are happy. And in this I agree with Brutus, and also with Aristotle, Xenocrates, Speusippus, Polemon.

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Post by “Cassius” of November 26, 2025 at 12:02 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4815-episode-309-td37-the-error-of-basing-happiness-on-the-alleged-divinity-of-the-hu/>

This episode will be out later today or at the latest tomorrow. Editing is almost complete and I want to particularly commend Joshua's windup on the main topic of this episode, starting around the 38 minute mark.

Post by "Cassius" of November 26, 2025 at 2:13 PM

Another note: In the first half of this episode, we take up Cicero's gross contradiction - which he calls out himself (!) between what he wrote in "On Ends" and what he is advocating here in "Tusculan Disputations."

The basic point is this:

- In On Ends, Cicero had taken the position that while the Stoics might say that only virtue is good and vice is evil, they also admitted that there were other things to be preferred (health) and not preferred (sickness). Here in On Ends Cicero defends Aristotle's school for saying that health is a good other than virtue, and sickness is an evil, because in the end their disagreement is only a matter of words, and they ultimately agree as to substance.

- Here in Tusculan Disputations Cicero is for some reason taking the *opposite* position, and he is siding with the Stoics that the Aristotelians are making a fatal error by admitting that anything is good other than virtue and anything evil other than vice.

Cicero makes no real effort to explain his inconsistency other than to say that he himself (Cicero) is a skeptic, and he can change his position from day to day according to whatever he thinks is probable.

Cicero doesn't see any problem with his change in positions, and in one thing he does remain absolutely consistent:- No matter what you think of the word-game dispute between Aristotle and Zeno, everyone agrees that Epicurus is a reprobate.

Post by "Cassius" of November 26, 2025 at 5:07 PM

Episode 309 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week our episode is entitled: "The Error of Basing Happiness On The Alleged Divinity of The Human Mind"

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