

Episode 310 - TD38 - Neither Happiness Nor Virtue Are Binary States

Post by “Cassius” of November 29, 2025 at 6:29 AM

Welcome to Episode 310 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 14 of Part 5](#) of Tusculan Disputations, continuing to look at how the Stoic/Platonic philosophers use logic to deduce that since only virtue is within our control, happiness comes from exclusively relying on virtue, excluding all else from being considered to be truly good.

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/68900528/media>

Post by “Joshua” of November 30, 2025 at 11:24 AM

I quoted from Montaigne's [essays](#), here is the relevant passage;

Quote

Philip having forcibly entered into Peloponnesus, and some one saying to Damidas that the Lacedaemonians were likely very much to suffer if they did not in time reconcile themselves to his favor: “Why, you pitiful fellow,” replied he, “what can they suffer who do not fear to die?” It being also asked of Agis, which way a man might live free? “Why,” said he, “by despising death.” These, and a thousand other sayings to the same purpose, distinctly sound of something more than the patient attending the stroke of death when it shall come; for there are several accidents in life far worse to suffer than death itself. Witness the Lacedaemonian boy taken by Antigonus, and sold for a slave, who being by his master commanded to some base employment: “Thou shalt see,” says the boy, “whom thou hast bought; it would be a shame for me to serve, being so

near the reach of liberty," and having so said, threw himself from the top of the house. Antipater severely threatening the Lacedaemonians, that he might the better incline them to acquiesce in a certain demand of his: "If thou threatenest us with more than death," replied they, "we shall the more willingly die"; and to Philip, having written them word that he would frustrate all their enterprises: "What, wilt thou also hinder us from dying?" This is the meaning of the sentence, "That the wise man lives as long as he ought, not so long as he can; and that the most obliging present Nature has made us, and which takes from us all color of complaint of our condition, is to have delivered into our own custody the keys of life; she has only ordered, one door into life, but a hundred thousand ways out. We may be straitened for earth to live upon, but earth sufficient to die upon can never be wanting, as Boiocalus answered the Romans." Why dost thou complain of this world? it detains thee not; thy own cowardice is the cause, if thou livest in pain.

Post by "Cassius" of December 4, 2025 at 9:27 AM

Notes during editing:

I set up a separate thread for the issue of [Happiness not requiring absolute absence of pain](#), and I'm going to name this episode something to the effect that Epicurus does not consider Happiness to be a binary state (where the only two options are happiness and unhappiness).

That raises something that Joshua points out, however: Epicurus does treat pain and pleasure as a binary state - that you are either feeling one or the other but not both at the same time and not an in-between state.

So we'll want to discuss: what's the difference between "happiness / unhappiness" and "pleasure/pain?"

Post by "Cassius" of December 5, 2025 at 9:35 AM

Joshua also quotes in this episode from Game of Thrones. I have not watched that so I am coming up dry looking for a video clip of the scene, but here is a link to the text:

Quotes by Davos

Quote

Melisandre: Are you a good man, Davos Seaworth?

Davos: I am a man. I am kind to [my wife](#), but I have known other women. I have tried to be a father to my sons, to help make them a place in this world. Aye, I've broken laws, but I never felt evil until tonight. I would say my parts are mixed, m'lady. Good and bad.

Melisandre: A grey man. Neither white nor black, but partaking of both. Is that what you are, Ser Davos?

Davos: What if I am? It seems to me that most men are grey.

Melisandre: If half of an onion is black with rot, it is a rotten onion. A man is good, or he is evil. [\[11\]](#)

—[Melisandre](#) and Davos

https://awoiaf.westeros.org/index.php/Davos_Seaworth

Post by “Cassius” of December 5, 2025 at 10:57 AM

Episode 310 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week our episode is entitled: "Neither Happiness Nor Virtue Are Binary States"

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