

Promising New Book ("Living For Pleasure") and Great New Article ("Are The Modern Stoics Really Epicurean?") Both By Emily Austin

Post by "Cassius" of November 14, 2022 at 8:38 AM

I don't know how quickly I can read and absorb the full book but hopping around I am *very* encouraged with what I see:

Quote

As for living like an Epicurean, I have a few suggestions, some drawn directly from Epicurean texts, others extrapolated from ancient texts for modern purposes.

This one might sound a bit obvious, of course, but the first thing to do is to **read Epicurus**. Though his writing is terse, what remains of his work is not voluminous. Trying to read Epicurus, at least most Epicurus, is not like trying to read Kant or Hegel. The Hellenistic Philosophers, especially the Roman ones, wrote to be read. Epicurus intended the *Letter to Menoecus*, [Principal Doctrines](#), and *Vatican Sayings* to be clear and easy to consult. If Epicurus' prose disappoints, then choose Lucretius, who tries as best he can to faithfully reflect Epicurus' views, but with charm, meter, and a wit finely attuned to human foibles. Lucretius claimed that his poetry was like putting honey on the cup of a glass of medicinal wormwood to make swallowing it easier. Think of Epicurus as a whiskey neat, and Lucretius as a tasty cocktail. People tend to prefer one over the other, but they both serve their purpose.

Some critics of Epicurus thought he encouraged Epicureans to unreflectively memorize and recite his writings without concern for comprehension. Among the many uncharitable objections to Epicureanism, I consider that accusation the most unfair. Reading, even memorizing, Epicurus is insufficient. You need to take the philosophy apart and see how it works, develop a fuller understanding, reflect on how it applies to living, especially in the context of your own life. Thankfully, you can plow through Epicurus multiple times without losing a single month of your life—try that with Kant!

Less obvious is the Epicurean advice to **write some Epicurus** of your own. In his *On Gratitude*, Philodemus recommends that we write our own texts.²

Remember that Epicureans think we all have individual natural dispositions and that our life histories and circumstances make us who we are. Some of us struggle more with pride, others with self-effacement. Some with greed, some with parsimonious

asceticism. Some with a desire for honor, some with a disdainful indifference to the approval of good people. Some of us express gratitude for people who harm us, while others of us are prone to ingratitude for those who help.