

# Epicureanism as the spiritual essence or 'religion' of an entire community

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2023 at 8:30 AM

## [Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

This is a very interesting discussion and there is much to discuss here.

I would agree that this is an interesting discussion from an intellectual perspective; however, I'm beginning to ask what the practical benefit is. And I say this in reference to the current discussion and to DeWitt's penchant for uncovering Epicurean origins of Christian practices and doctrine. While I remain unconvinced and skeptical of much of these alleged connections among Epicureanism, Judaism, and Christianity, I also don't see why it should be important other than for historical curiosity. It's not as if we who find value in Epicurus's philosophy will suddenly see the light, so to speak, and convert to Christian or Jewish practice.

You have included a voluminous amount of information and commentary in your post no. 26 so I do not have time at this moment to respond to it all. Below is merely a start and not meant to comprehensively reply in any way. I'll try to come back to it later, but you raise some interesting points, not all of which I agree with.

## [Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

For now I will focus on the claim that Epicureanism is about 'living your life to the fullest instead of being a victim on the cross'. This ignores the fact that 'living your life to the fullest' was not the easiest thing to do in antiquity.

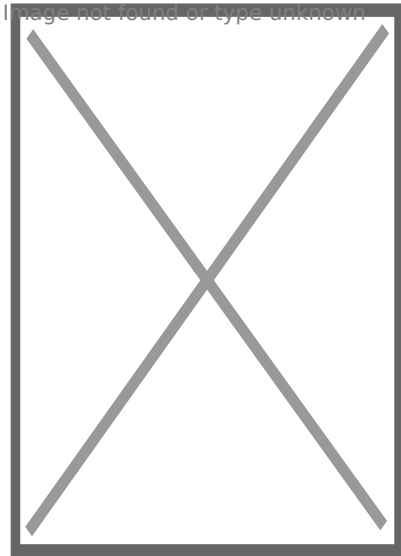
I would quibble with the formulation "living your life to the fullest," although I realize that's a popular way of phrasing it. From my perspective, Epicurus's philosophy is about experiencing the available pleasure at every moment of our lives, every moment of our existence. My perspective on the mention of "bread and water" in the Letter to Menoikeus and elsewhere is about taking pleasure in quotidian experiences like a simple meal we may eat every day. "Living life to the fullest" sounds too much like the skydiving, popular culture "carpe diem" "fear of missing out" "you only live once" idea. While those experiences may be part of Epicurus's philosophy, it's not the primary message.

## [Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

Mary Beard and Vaclav Smil

For those unfamiliar with Beard and Smil:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary\\_Beard\\_\(classicist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Beard_(classicist))



[Vaclav Smil - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

#### [Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

If you oppose luxury you have to embrace minimalism and if you are skeptical toward political ambitions you have to embrace the modesty of a life with limited public exposure within the confines of a small community of friends.

From my reading of the extant texts, I do not see Epicurus opposing luxury when it is available nor do I see him advocating an embrace of minimalism. Additionally, Epicurus did not sequester himself nor his students within the walls of the Garden. His house was inside the city walls of Athens. He took part, and encouraged his students to do the same, in the rites and festivals of his city. As one example of one who has confronted this "minimalist" Epicurus idea, Dr. Emily Austin's recent book does an excellent job of putting the myth of Epicurus's ascetism/minimalism to rest.

That's all I have time for right now. More to come later possibly.