

2024 Discussion Of Current Books On Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of May 26, 2024 at 2:08 PM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

However, when someone invests any time in the study of Epicureanism, it becomes very clear very quickly that DeWitt wrote his book not as a scholar but more as a fanboy of Epicurus. With all due respect to his work, he doesn't seem to have problems drawing conclusions out of thin air to make Epicureanism what he wants Epicureanism to be instead of presenting it for what it was, to the best of available resources.

There's no need for us to "take a poll" or line up likes and dislikes on this point, but since I have and will continue to recommend "Epicurus and His Philosophy" as one of the two best starting points for someone who wants to get an overview of the entire philosophy, I don't want people reading this thread in the future to see it without a response from me, because I strongly disagree with this characterization of the DeWitt book. No other academic writer has had the courage to break from the negative prevailing consensus about Epicurus as thoroughly as DeWitt, and no one else comes close to presenting the entire sweep of the philosophy in a sympathetic and approachable way. Some may disagree with some of these conclusions, but he deserves a lot of credit for what he accomplished, and indeed his attitude that the prevailing texts have been mistranslated and unappreciated is very close to the same observation that brought up the subject in this thread.

The other book I rank at the same level of usefulness is "Living for Pleasure," but that has a different target market, and makes no effort to cover many of the details that you will find brought together in one place only in DeWitt.

The two books go well together, with "Living for Pleasure" as a very well written "self-help" book to get people who might not otherwise think about Epicurus started in reading about him, and "Epicurus and His Philosophy" providing many additional background details and explanatory analysis about many other important aspects of his philosophy.

Thanks for the opportunity to repeat this because I fully recognize, and it's important to understand, that DeWitt's book is not universally appreciated in the world of Epicurean writing, the best evidence of which is that it is rarely if ever cited as a source in most Epicurean commentary over the last 50 years.

Regardless of how opinions divide, one fact I can state with confidence is that were it not for DeWitt's interpretations and explanations, which cast Epicurus in an entirely different light than most, this forum would not exist.