

# Thoughts and Criticism of Chapter 1

Post by "Cassius" of April 13, 2020 at 8:16 AM

## [Quote from Eugenios](#)

The items I've found just through Chapter 2 give me pause and make me feel that I can't quite take what he writes at face value.

As general comments on all of the post, until I have time to come back to the details - it is certainly true that no reader should take any commentator on Epicurus at face value without reading into the details and judging for himself. The allusions to Christianity in DeWitt are a direction I personally would not have gone, but no one who understands Epicurus is going to be confused about Epicurus' attitude toward supernatural religion, which is the ultimate point. The references I remember from deWitt relate mainly to issues of social relationships and interactions and those strike me as at least partially true, but ultimately largely irrelevant to the big picture. The ultimate question in evaluating DeWitt is whether he gives the reader the broader understanding that people are just not going to get if they fixate on the ethics of "absence of pain" and ignore the rest of the philosophy and the history.

As to "enemy of religion" I would have to look at particular passages but as a general rule I think DeWitt was making an important point - the Epicureans viewed "religion" as differently as they viewed "gods" and within their context they were devoutly religious. We may have difficulty explaining that to modern ears but that's not necessarily a fault of the Epicureans.

As far as the comments on the missionary / evangelizing aspect, I find DeWitt's comments to be generally consistent with what I read in other commentators, as there seems to be a general consensus that Epicureans were very interested in spreading the word to others, not the least of the evidence in support of which appears to be the many books of Epicurus and Lucretius' poem itself. To me, it is natural that this perspective creates in the person who digs into it a desire to talk about it to others, obviously not indiscriminately, but to anyone you are seriously concerned about as a friend.

And as to Stoicism, I think DeWitt is primarily referring to it as an organized school consistent with the founding. Modern Stoics hardly deserve the name at all, and even Marcus Aurelius was a hodgepodge of conflicting ideas. In fairness to DeWitt I would interpret his comments as referring to the end of the organized school coinciding with the emergence of Christianity or whatever period seems consistent with the end of its pure form. As to Epicurean philosophy one could also take the position that the essence of Epicurus is found in the atomistic non-supernatural universe, which was not so amenable to being melded in with the emergence of Christianity. What came afterward in the vague adoption of "happiness" as the goal of life hardly deserves the name of Epicurean philosophy any more than does the modern version of

Stoicism deserve the name Stoic.