

Opening of SETI / Space Exploration Forum

Post by "Cassius" of July 27, 2019 at 6:14 AM

"We either must entice our own interpretation from the extant texts, or rely on others to do that work for us." << And relying on others to do that for us is extremely dangerous. Most modern and ancient commentators are personally hostile to Epicurean ideas. While there are some limited exceptions I know of no modern commentator I have confidence in other than DeWitt. Even there, the only reason I have confidence in DeWitt that his interpretations line up with common sense interpretation of the texts that are available, rather than with a nonsensical harping on "absence of pain" that has been used to confuse since Cicero's time.

Either pleasure is the goal or it is not, despite the commentators' efforts to make Epicurus incoherent on that score. But any normal person of common sense has the capacity to cut through the word games of the Ciceros and the Plutarchs and their modern ascetic descendants.

Combine the capacity for feeling with an understanding that there is no life after death, that no supernatural beings exist, that life is not unique on Earth, and that "reason" is a tool of feeling just like all "virtue," and it becomes obvious what Epicurus taught, and why the "establishment" has hated him ever after for teaching it.

.....that life is not unique on Earth" <<< That reminds me that I am going to make it my personal mission to be sure that we cultivate within the Epicurean community a "SETI / Space Exploration" Division! I am taking names for the list now! 😊

Post by "Cassius" of July 27, 2019 at 7:04 AM

i sometimes think that some people don't appreciate the implications that will follow from finding life outside of earth. Yes, religion adjusted to Darwin by making evolution the tool of the supreme being. But even after evolution we are left with the implication that we humans on Earth is "special to God" because no life is yet found to exist anywhere else.

When life is discovered elsewhere religion will adjust again, probably further in the stoic "the universe is god" direction. But once we see that we are not the only intelligent life in the universe, it will become less possible than ever for priests to convince people of normal

intelligence that we are divine sparks destined for eternal life.

Of course our chosen peoples will no doubt try to convince the "Martians" that they should be accepted as the "light of the world" and hear the same "good news" that we are burdened with on Earth, but I don't think that will get very far. The "Martians" will not likely be as gullible as are most Earthlings.

Post by "Elayne" of July 27, 2019 at 9:09 AM

Well, the "Martians" might be even more gullible... it would depend on the evolutionary pressures in their environment, I guess?

I am thinking that there is generally always a subset of humans who have their minds changed by evidence, and then there is a larger subset who will maintain their current beliefs as a social issue, no matter what the evidence says. For religion, that middle group always seems to find a way to pretend there are two magisteria. The dying out of those beliefs may involve some social process different from exposure to facts. I have seen research that people in affluent, stable societies with low socioeconomic disparity tend to become much less religious.

And then there is a smaller but vehement subset who are the "flat-earthers", out of touch with both science and the cultural majority.

Post by "Joshua" of July 28, 2019 at 10:17 PM

This question was one of the three major 'problems' in Epicureanism that led St. Augustine of Hippo to reject the school as impossible to reconcile with the faith he was trying to codify. However attractive he found our ethics, he couldn't tolerate a philosophy that taught: first, that the Universe was the sport of chance; second, that the soul perished with the body; and third, that there were other worlds, and an infinity of time in both directions.

He responded thus; "There is no place beside the world, no time before the world." Some readers try to reinterpret that phrase to mean "no place beside the universe, etc..."

But it's very clear what he meant, and who he was responding to.

Post by “Cassius” of May 13, 2024 at 10:43 AM

I'm now getting concerned that [Don](#) won't live long enough to see the Moon and/or Mars colonized, so I better keep up my posts in this forum so that we keep track of the technology and coax it along!

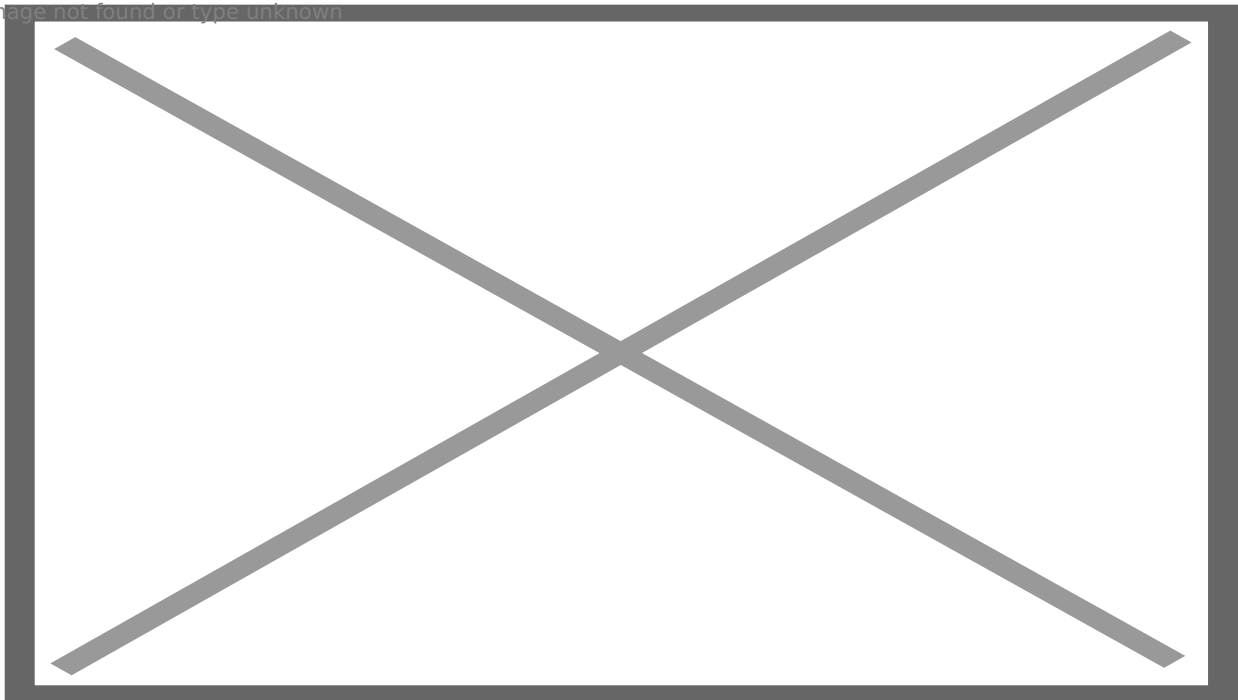
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Post by “Kalosyni” of May 20, 2024 at 4:32 PM

This is a fun read:

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Humanity's great leap into interstellar space – the space between the stars – has begun. Here are 10 things we've learned about going interstellar.
science.nasa.gov

