

Online Book Discussion for Lucretius and DeWitt's "Epicurus and His Philosophy"

Post by "Cassius" of August 12, 2019 at 8:38 AM

Last year we held a series of discussions on the DISCORD chat service where we went through the Norman Dewitt book on Epicurus by chapter. [Planning for Upcoming Voice Chats on DeWitt's Epicurus and His Philosophy](#)

We reached Chapter 12 and though we didn't finish the full book, I thought the chats were pretty successful and worth finishing and doing again. In fact, they are worth doing over and over as a general introduction to the philosophy.

This weekend it also occurred to me that even many of our most regular people have not completely gone through Lucretius' On The Nature of Things poem. We therefore need to set up a series of online to discussions to organize our reading of that.

Let's talk about setting these up. Here are some questions to consider:

1 - Do we pick up where we left off on the Dewitt book, or do we start over? We were going chapter by chapter. Does that method still make sense?

2 - Let's set up an entirely separate discussion program for Lucretius. We have access to several online free translations and it will be relatively easy to divide the books of the poem up into readable chunks. As is, I think each book is far too long and detailed to be covered in one session per book.

3 - What day of the week and time of day is best? Shall we try to do one of these per week, or one every other week so that we do one of Lucretius and one of DeWitt per month? What kind of schedule makes sense?

Post by "Cassius" of August 12, 2019 at 12:59 PM

For the Lucretius discussion, let's plan to use the versions listed below:

We will probably refer to several translations during the discussion so we can compare meanings of the difficult passages, but below is what I think we should use as the base. Two important caveats: (1) I think we should skip over the "poetic" versions in favor of the narrative

translations, as the narratives are intended to be the most accurate and faithful to the original meaning, and (2) It will be best to use the public domain versions so that the same edition is available to everyone:

1. The most recent public domain version is Cyril Bailey's, and that is the one I think we should refer to primarily. It is well regarded, written by an eminent Epicurus scholar, and is accessible to everyone at Archive.org: <https://archive.org/stream/onnatur...age/n3/mode/2up>

2. On any issues that appear to be unclear, all of us can refer to several other translations, next in order of time and authority being Hugh Munro: <https://archive.org/stream/in.erne...age/n5/mode/2up>

3. I have found that even though it is considerably older, the Daniel Browne 1743 edition is frequently easier to understand than Bailey or Munro: <https://archive.org/stream/tlucret...age/n9/mode/2up>

Most of the text of these three editions is transcribed here, so we can cut and paste to use in online discussion: https://epicureanfriends.com/wiki/doku.php?...ature_of_things

Of course for those of us who have access, we can refer to the Martin Ferguson Smith / Hackett Publishing edition, which I think is probably the most current cutting-edge academic version. <https://www.amazon.com/Nature-Things-Lucretius/dp/0872205878>

Post by “Cassius” of August 18, 2019 at 4:13 PM

Let's go ahead and schedule our next online book discussion session -- our next session will be on Chapter 12 - The new Hedonism. [Julie](#) has offered to prepare some discussion notes, and she needs time to do that, so let's schedule this for 11 AM eastern time on Sunday morning, September 1. If this is an unworkable time for you please let us know and we will try to coordinate the best time for as many people as possible.

All are welcome, but [Godfrey](#) and [Joshua](#) , you guys in particular deserve a personal invitation given your regular participation here. We should have five or six people at least so please plan to join us when you can. We're using Skype now so all you need is a working Skype connection on your computer or cell phone.

Post by “Joshua” of August 18, 2019 at 6:49 PM

That should be September 1st, right? I'd love to try and participate. Obviously my work schedule is very erratic!

Post by “Cassius” of August 18, 2019 at 6:52 PM

Argh -- of course -- I changed it! thanks Joshua!

Post by “Godfrey” of August 18, 2019 at 10:16 PM

Why thank you! That sounds good, and chapter 12 should be provide an interesting discussion. I'm pretty sure I'll be able to make it.