

Profile of Past Reading

Post by “Cassius” of October 21, 2019 at 1:23 PM

I think it is extremely interesting and helpful to discussion to get at least a general idea of someone's reading background, not because we want to play one-upmanship games, but because it helps give clues to someone's interpretations. For example how much have they read into Epicurus himself, or Lucretius, or the Ciceronian passages on Epicurus, or the Lucian material, or Plutarch.

I need to come up with some kind of way to survey that and maybe encourage people to add that to their profile. Thoughts on good ways to get the most out of that idea?

Edit 1 : Where is the best place for this? Encourage people to put it in their main "profile" (either "wall" or "about me") that is clickable from their avatar icon? Encourage them to make it part of their "footer" that displays with every post and/or under the user history that appears with every post (in the box in the left column)?

Edit 2: Would it be helpful to have a list of core texts that people could include with a checkmark or something to indicate if they have read it?

Post by “Todd” of October 21, 2019 at 3:54 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Would it be helpful to have a list of core texts that people could include with a checkmark or something to indicate if they have read it?

Yes, that would definitely be helpful. First, it makes it easier for people to do, but also it gives an idea of the kind of things you're looking for.

Ideally, it would be nice to have a pre-defined list, plus the ability to add custom entries.

Post by “Cassius” of October 21, 2019 at 4:57 PM

	Core Texts (In Order of Advisability For A New Reader)	Has Read?	Notes:
	<i>The Biography of Epicurus By Diogenes Laertius (Chapter 10).</i> This includes all Epicurus' letters and the Authorized Doctrines. Supplement with the Vatican list of Sayings. New readers should be prepared to skim the details of the scientific letters to Herodotus and to Pythocles, and even the details of the ethical letter to Menoeceus, and to come back to these after reading the Dewitt commentary on how these details fit together into the big picture.	Yes, in full.	Read the CD Yonge translation.
1	"Epicurus And His Philosophy" - Norman DeWitt		
3	"On The Nature of Things"- Lucretius	Yes, in full	Read the translations by Munro, Bailey, Daniel Browne, and Humphries
4	Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section	Yes	
5	Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section	In Part	(I have read the entire book, but filled in "in part" for example)
6	<i>The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda</i> - Martin Ferguson Smith translation		
7	"A Few Days In Athens" - Frances Wright		
8	Lucian Core Texts on Epicurus: (1) Alexander the Oracle-Monger, (2) Hermotimus (3) Others?		
9	Plato's Philebus		
10	Philodemus "On Methods of Inference" (De Lacy version, including his appendix on relationship of Epicurean canon to Aristotle and other Greeks)		
11	"The Greeks on Pleasure" -Gosling & Taylor Sections on Epicurus, especially on katastematic and kinetic pleasure.	In part	Have not read the full book, but read the Epicurus chapter(s).
12	Chance and Natural Law in Epicurean Philosophy - AA Long -	Yes	

(Please note that I am making rearrangements to this list based on subsequent comments, so subsequent comments may be based on a version of this table that is no longer current.)

Post by “Cassius” of October 21, 2019 at 5:02 PM

The above is my draft of a list and layout. I have added sample entries in the "Has read" and "Notes" columns. Of course there are numerous commentaries that could be added, but part of this exercise ought to be to encourage people to read the original materials, so the other commentaries besides DeWitt probably deserve to be at the bottom of the list, if at all. Once someone has read the DeWitt commentary they are well equipped to read most if not all of the other primary original sources.

Post by “Elayne” of October 21, 2019 at 5:02 PM

I vote for checkmarks

I'd also be interested in knowing whether members adopted the philosophy after reading about it (and if so, which reading)-- or if while reading, they recognized Epicurus had the same philosophy as them, which is what happened to me.

Because of the unappealing and inaccurate way EP is written about these days, when I was younger I had dismissed it as wrong. Never realized Epicurus was being misinterpreted until I finally read the core texts myself and thought whoaa! This brilliant guy agrees with me [!!!!]! And he's done much more with it, more pieces, made it airtight! There's not a single hole in it, and now I understand exactly why the other philosophies never worked for me. I'm not alone after all!

Post by “Cassius” of October 21, 2019 at 5:12 PM

Let's let this thread roll for a while and see if there are comments that would lead to significant changes in the list or the order of presentation. I think if we are focusing on the original materials, then the list is pretty well set in stone as that list is very limited. Might play around with adding specific mention of additional Lucian material, or something like that (Plutarch Against Colotes?) but I bet this list as is covers most bases.

Then we can see how best to suggest that everyone do one. Maybe I go in as an admin in the Welcome XXX post and add this into that thread for most (or the active) people, and all new people?

I suppose there might be a way to have one master spreadsheet and each person with their own column, but I suspect that would be impracticable. Probably every person needs their own, kind of like we were encouraging each person to do an outline.

Post by “Elayne” of October 21, 2019 at 5:30 PM

Is #3 supposed to be On Ends?

Post by “Cassius” of October 21, 2019 at 5:34 PM

Bingo Elayne -- fixing now! thanks

Post by “Cassius” of October 21, 2019 at 6:56 PM

I could see moving item 5 (the Inscription) up above the two excerpts from Cicero, except I think the excerpts from Cicero are probably more clearly written, and stand alone pretty well, and thus convey more important information quickly (especially on the "virtue" issue) than does the Inscription, especially since the inscription is kind of fragmentary. Anyone have a comment on the relative importance of the Inscription vs the extended excerpts from Cicero?

Also, I could see an argument that even before reading anything else, the best place to start is Norman DeWitt's book. So please comment on that as well, if you have a thought?

And let's slant this list in order of importance to a "new" person who has little or no background in reading Greek philosophy. If that is taken as the context, does that move the DeWitt book to the top?

Post by “Godfrey” of October 21, 2019 at 7:29 PM

Starting with Diogenes Laertius is a good way to get an overview, then reading DeWitt next would give an in-depth view. Then the two Ciceros; I might even read these before DeWitt.

The first I ever heard of Epicurus was when I read Cicero's On The Nature of the Gods. I was trying to come to grips with the Stoic idea of providence... after reading Vellius I haven't touched another Stoic text! So this and On Ends could come before DeWitt, and then when reading DeWitt one would have read most of the basics.

Reading [Philebus](#) before Lucretius seems interesting to me as it dovetails well with DeWitt's commentary and really points out the contrast between Epicurus and Plato. By this point one might be ready for Lucretius....

I really wish that I'd had a list like this to work through when I started exploring EP. I did use Elemental Epicureanism (and still do) and Hiram's "getting started" page, but with so little background in philosophy I had no sense of the scope of the texts or the relationships between them.

Post by “Cassius” of October 21, 2019 at 8:01 PM

I too think Diogenes Laertius is general enough, and interesting enough, to keep the attention of new readers. They are going to get bogged down however in the letter to Herodotus and Pythocles and not know what to make of it, so perhaps we can warn that they should feel free to skip over that until they read dEwitt to get the big picture, and then go back to it.

Same point goes for Lucretius and your comment there.

Very good points Godfrey....

Post by “Cassius” of October 21, 2019 at 8:02 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

The first I ever heard of Epicurus was when I read Cicero's On The Nature of the Gods. I was trying to come to grips with the Stoic idea of providence... after reading Vellius I haven't touched another Stoic text!

That is a very interesting story! Don't think I have heard of that way of catching on to Epicurus before...

Post by "Godfrey" of October 21, 2019 at 9:28 PM

Certainly glad I did catch on to him!

Post by "Martin" of October 26, 2019 at 4:14 AM

There is a size problem with adding this to our profiles. My profile is already at the maximum limit. I had to compress some formulations when I updated it with one more completed reading.

Post by "Cassius" of October 26, 2019 at 6:23 AM

Thank you for letting me know Martin! I am investigating that now. I don't see an option that I can change but I have posted a request on the user forum and I will report back to you.

Post by "Cassius" of October 27, 2019 at 8:39 PM

Martin - I found the setting and have tripled the allowed size. Now that I know where this is it will be easy to increase if we need more space. Please test when you get a chance! Thanks!

Post by "Cassius" of November 5, 2019 at 3:37 PM

Well I just discovered, during the process of pasting this into the Welcome for "Pepicurus," that it is not easy to cut and paste this spreadsheet from one post to another. Apparently it is necessary to copy the "code" and insert the "code" into each new post. That may be beyond the ability or energy of many users, so I will have to look for another method -- probably just a simple list like this:

- 1 The Biography of Epicurus By Diogenes Laertius (Chapter 10). This includes all Epicurus' letters and the Authorized Doctrines. Supplement with the Vatican list of Sayings.
- 2 "Epicurus And His Philosophy" - Norman DeWitt
- 3 "On The Nature of Things"- Lucretius
- 4 Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section
- 5 Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section
- 6 The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda - Martin Ferguson Smith translation
- 7 "A Few Days In Athens" - Frances Wright
- 8 Lucian Core Texts on Epicurus: (1) Alexander the Oracle-Monger, (2) Hermotimus (3) Others?
- 9 Plato's [Philebus](#)
- 10 Philodemus "On Methods of Inference" (De Lacy version, including his appendix on relationship of Epicurean canon to Aristotle and other Greeks)
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- 12 Chance and Natural Law in Epicurean Philosophy - AA Long -