

## Dead Reddit / The "Isms" Thread

**Post by "Eikadistes" of November 21, 2019 at 5:09 PM**

And like **that**, I'm done with Reddit.

I've otherwise enjoyed working with the community, but I found the moderation to be severely disenchanting.

*Given reason for deleting my meme:*

"Yes, sorry thought I'd left my reasoning. I'm generally okay with memes but this one seemed a little low effort and had the potential to spark some unfriendly arguments. Hope you understand and aren't too put out. Hope all's well."

*My response:*

"This is **highly** disappointing.

Honestly, I do **not** understand, and this convinces me that I have no business with this group.

I'd encourage you to create an account and participate in [<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/>]. There, you'll find a safe community of friends who are not concerned with offending the *delicate sensibilities* of spiritualists who participate in supernatural religion; nor will you find any apologists for supernatural religion.

You can find a complete collection of my 'low effort' memes there, as well."

[epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/741/](http://www.epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/741/)

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**Post by "Cassius" of November 21, 2019 at 5:45 PM**

Nate what happened? The Epicurean reddit deleted a post?

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**Post by "Eikadistes" of November 21, 2019 at 5:51 PM**

Yeah, they deleted my "Brace Yourself" meme to avoid stirring controversy among Christians.

Apparently ... *r/Epicureanism* gets a lot of traffic from argumentative Christians?

Hiram and I have discussed some of the inappropriate decisions moderators have made in the past, so this was the last straw for me. It's not a very engaged community, and it attracts a lot of attention from non-Epicureans who have no interest in studying Epicurean philosophy.

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### **Post by "Elayne" of November 21, 2019 at 7:31 PM**

Wow! I'm sorry that happened, Nate! I love your memes.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of November 21, 2019 at 8:23 PM**

Elayne is right. I am sorry that the reddit guys were jerks. That's why we needed "a place of our own" and I am glad and proud that someone as talented as you is part of it!

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### **Post by "Charles" of November 22, 2019 at 12:14 AM**

@Nate I'm not too familiar with reddit but I've expressed my frustration at the current Epicurean subreddit, and my attempts to reach the moderators have been left in silence. I briefly mentioned it once in a Skype Discussion that the head mod on there once approvingly commented on a *r/Stoicism* post, of a mural of Epicurus with an attached quote from Epictetus.

If we decided to make our own Epicurean subreddit I would suggest the forum be *r/Epicurean\_Philosophy* and exponentially more organized and aesthetically pleasing, with proper rules and all. I haven't been too active in the past few weeks, even on my Discord, since I'm packing up everything and moving this weekend. But if you made that push for a new subreddit we can call our own, I would be happy to moderate it with you.

Quick Update: I just reserved that subreddit name. I think we should try and foster a genuine Epicurean subreddit, and I would be more than happy to add you @Nate and [Hiram](#) as mods. I'll

start making the necessary changes to the Discord bot that auto-posts from r/Epicureanism and make an announcement for those also interested. But I won't be too active until I get settled into my new place.

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### Post by “Cassius” of November 22, 2019 at 1:37 AM

Sounds good Charles. Also, did you add a new tag line to your profile / messages? Looks like you selected a light font which is unreadable in the default light theme of the forum. Would probably be best to use the "remove font color" command.

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### Post by “Eikadistes” of November 22, 2019 at 8:52 AM

That's an excellent idea, [Charles](#)! Thank you - I was thinking of doing the same thing, but I'm questioning how effective Reddit is, as a whole, in promoting genuine Epicurean discussion. I'm sure, however, that you can guide the forum in a proper direction, and I'd be happy to support you in doing so.

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### Post by “Eikadistes” of November 22, 2019 at 8:58 AM

One of my first posts on r/Epicurean\_Philosophy may be the 'Disapproving Drake' meme I made that disapproves of the term '**Epicureanism**', and approves of '**Epicurean Philosophy**'. [



"Epicureanism"

]

It would be an opportunity to discuss the etymological origin of '-isms' as [Elli](#) has often elaborated, and explain why the '-isms' require a kind of cultish following that approves of a kind of faith-based dogma, whether that be supernatural religion or virtue ethics.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of November 22, 2019 at 9:14 AM**

#### [Quote from Nate](#)

I was thinking of doing the same thing, but I'm questioning how effective Reddit is, as a whole, in promoting genuine Epicurean discussion.

Given the nature of the way things are, my view is that there are lots of productive places to check in regularly, including Reddit, but with the goal of finding and moving good people to more productive places, not investing a lot of time and effort into too many platforms. But it's all a matter of time and resources, and Charles is a good example that if someone is into a particular venue, like Discord, it makes good sense to establish a beachhead there. But as long as a platform is ultimately under the control of people who would ultimately disapprove of Epicurean philosophy (and most of them are under the control of such people) it doesn't make sense to me to invest more effort than is appropriate to be sure that when new good people appear, we find them and re-channel them.

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### **Post by “Elli” of November 22, 2019 at 9:55 AM**

All -isms, imo are like a sheepfold that the owner/founder is a shepherd accompanied by his helpers, as also they have and some watchdogs. All of them the only they seek is to box inside the sheepfold as many sheep as possible, in order to shear them, to milk them, and in the end, to slaughter many of them.

in -isms usually, the purpose is idealistic and the people inside them I doubt that are able to measure among pleasure and pain prudently for the positive purpose of pleasure, since, usually, the purpose in -isms is duty and virtue... and the absence of pain ! lol

In -isms there are many suckers that are happy to give without getting back at least something of what they gave. In -isms there is not of what we epicureans say and be convinced of such

issues if are in accordance with the study of Nature as we examine the phenomena and the causes that cause them, and as we say also that the basis of friendship is on the common benefit and the trust, our means are the virtues, and our common purpose is pleasure. 😊

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### Post by “Elli” of November 22, 2019 at 5:43 PM

And I would like also to add that in -isms the person loses his uniqueness, he is the unnamed and unidentified, and for himself and for the others, because as the purpose in -isms is always "higher" and also abstract there is no this unique measurement through persons' own feelings. So, this person is not person anymore is just one of the mob and nothing more.

And also I would like to add that usually the persons that drive to -isms are not able to be real friends even with themselves, since friendship has and responsibility, and responsibility needs actions and feelings of empathy for the very known next other. Feelings of empathy, and permit me to use an Aristotelian term means friends on the basis of “sharing the peck of salt” and as we say it similar today in greek we are friends that together "we ate bread and salt" that means



that drive in -isms lack of high emotional intelligence EQ.

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### Post by “Hiram” of November 24, 2019 at 11:27 AM

### [Quote from Nate](#)

That's an excellent idea, [Charles](#)! Thank you - I was thinking of doing the same thing, but I'm questioning how effective Reddit is, as a whole, in promoting genuine Epicurean discussion. I'm sure, however, that you can guide the forum in a proper direction, and I'd be happy to support you in doing so.

As for effectiveness, I put together from time to time a "State of the Garden" post looking at what has brought in the most traffic, and Reddit has consistently been a HUGE source of traffic. Perhaps the /Eism sub-reddit has not drawn as much as other ones like /atheism, but it doesn't work very well as a FORUM among friends. So it's useful, but it's best used as a source of traffic into our other content.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of November 24, 2019 at 12:07 PM**

### [Quote from Hiram](#)

So it's useful, but it's best used as a source of traffic into our other content.

That's the way I see it too.

But I'll add something that continues to be a topic of my own debates with myself. "Source of traffic" is not always a good thing, when the traffic consists mostly of people who are so committed to other approaches that it becomes a waste of time to engage them.

At the moment in my own mind the calculation comes down to "engagement is good, but at the same time up-front clarity is essential" so that we should engage where it makes sense, but as soon as possible, weed out the people who unlikely in the long term to become allies.

For the foreseeable future, depending on the venue, we can count on - what - maybe 75% of the people who we come across - are primarily committed to religion or some other incompatible view of life. I think we should be nice and cordial but also firm in weeding them out so we can focus on people who "get" the message at a pretty deep level.

And one of the more interesting things to me is that it appears there are pretty good "associative indicators" of where someone is going to end up. For example, someone's general disposition toward Nietzsche seems pretty indicative. He is very difficult to interpret or agree with all the time, but I attribute the association to a certain "intensity" that people see in him, regardless of whether they always agree. For example, writing a book with a title and theme

like "Antichrist"!! That took a lot of courage and intensity for his time and place -- not to mention his deep understanding and distaste for Stoicism. So deep I would almost call it "instinctive."

We may disagree with particular people in their application of "feeling," but I think that it's one of the fundamentals that we deal with is that we have an affinity for people of strong emotion more so than the aloof cerebral types. And is that not a good description of the ("British") stiff-upper-lip approach?

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## Post by “Eikadistes” of November 24, 2019 at 2:08 PM

Regarding "-isms", we've produced great dialogue through the Facebook forum about the preference for "*Epicurean Philosophy*" to "*Epicureanism*"; and while it's a smaller, linguistic note, I think the points that have been brought up serve as a useful teaching tool to highlight the importance of understanding Greek etymology. I went through the last five years of posts by searching our Facebook page, and picked out the most relevant observations (I'm also putting this here as a placeholder, because I just organized it, and would like to return to this at a later time):

**July 20, 2014, Harris Demitiadis:** "On the issue at hand I would prefer the term 'epicurean philosophy' to 'epicureanism' for the following reasons: The suffix *-ism* is of English origin and *-ισμος* is its translation into contemporary Greek. The suffix *-ισμός* - had no similar uses in ancient Greece, so when it is used today our mind - of the Greek speaking people - goes straight to a contemporary international idea translated into Greek. But here our purpose is to denote the opposite. Similarly, while the contemporary word, e.g. 'commun - *ism*', «κομμουν - *ισμός*», sounds familiar for both English and Greek speaking people, the word 'epicureanism', which refers to the ancient past, sounds meaningful to the English speaking people, but misleading and awkward to the Greek speaking ones. So, my opinion and my wish is to stay with the two word term 'epicurean philosophy'."

**Elli Pensa replies to this post that** "'The big difference at the spiritual attitude of the Greeks and the Romans'. This difference is indicating at the type of the linguistic fossils of the two cultures that survived in the modern world. The Global Greek words like music, philosophy, theater, geometry, mathematics, physics, astronomy, political, architecture, demos-democracy, words that they declare a youth's shininess and a weight of quality towards to the conditions that the Latin language has saved. Under the conventional shape of : "*ismus*" the rescue to the terms of the Latin language expresses: the team, the indiscriminate, the unexceptional. But the enviable uniqueness is missing. Eg *rationalism* (ratio), *potentialism* (potentia), *Imperialism* (imperium), *socialism* (socius), *Pacifism* (pax), *militarism* (miles), *Realism* (res), *pessimism*

(malus), optimism (bonus) etc [...] According to the above excerpt of Dimitris Liantinis, when we say epicurean-ism we are missing this 'enviable uniqueness of the person'. And the epicurean philosophy, first of all, is referring to that uniqueness of the PERSON and not to the impersonal of the MASSES. Thus, for our proper thinking if we use epicureanism and not epicurean philosophy in our terminology and in our reference... our view for the Epicurean Philosophy collapses...and collapses (to use one of his own Liantini's words) συγκορμοδεντρόριζη "syngormodentrorizi"(=tree trunk with its roots). 😊😊 Thank you "

**April 2, 2015, Elli Pensa:** "*Epicureanism or Epicurean Philosophy?* | The Epicurean philosophy does not deal with political ideas or religions. First principle for the epicurean philosophy is the uniqueness of the person and not the masses. Because ALL these theories, as it has been proved for a million of times, are consisting of deterministic ideologies which are ending with the suffix '-ISM', are all addressed to the mob, and are in accordance to a dire necessity of a final purpose, which is opposite of the Nature of all things. | Thus, the Epicurean philosophy and an epicurean person - that studies the Nature of all things - does not deal with failed ideas of fake solutions to the problems of his life. | HIS ONE AND UNIQUE LIFE. | However, the Epicurean philosophy and an epicurean person has the ability to examine all the phenomena in Nature, in accordance with his philosophical background, whatever has to do with human's life and his nature. As well as he has the power to do it through the CANON, just to separate and clarify the myth from reality. The Canon is his huge tool and his method to understand who is lying and who is saying the truth. The Epicurean philosophy provides solutions in human life, when trusted friends will be next to each another just to give help and solutions to any difficult situation in their life. | BECAUSE: | <<*The wise man holds that friendship is first brought about due to practical need, just as we sow the earth for crops, but it is formed and maintained by means of a community of life among those who find mutual pleasure in it.*>> | So simple, so human and so clear is this practical and wise solution of epicurean philosophy and it is not only a political abstract idea of a solution, BUT A REVOLUTION! | Unfortunately, an ideologically confused and non wise person cannot stand and accept this solution. Because an ideologically confused person cannot trust anyone, he cannot stand to take the responsibility of himself; he cannot stand the reality, because he lives a life full of fears. | And due to the fact of these fears, he is closed in his jail, like a corral of sheep. The ideologies are his grass to rehashing as a ruminant. In this way he acts, and he is a follower to any political ideological party to recognize a savior leader who this leader wants all the pleasure for himself. This leader, as it has been proved for a million of times, he would speak to him about a 'necessity', about a 'duty', about a 'virtue' and about a 'foggy dream' opposed of the reality. And finally, the end of the story would be that he'll led him to a war to kill himself and the opposite enemies. | But...the wise man gather together a school, but never so as to become a leader of crowds (or to be led by other leaders). | Thus, and in conclusion, the epicurean person would never be a follower to any ideological political party because HE DOES NOT ACCEPT that the things and the matters in our life are DETERMINED or EXPLAINED from any absolute truth of a leader or a god. Since the epicurean person CAN examine, check and explain all the matters for himself and by himself. So, he would never be a follower to any political ideology or theories in general, because he

doesn't want to be closed in a jail and injure himself. | Because: <<*injuries are done among men either because of hatred, envy, or contempt, all which the wise man overcomes by reason*>>. | So simple are the things, I suppose."

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## Post by "Eikadistes" of November 24, 2019 at 2:11 PM

(cont.)

**October 11, 2016, Cassius Amicus:** "...it is much less likely that we will fall prey to skeptic *ism*, *stoicism*, religion, and the other '*isms*' which call us away from reality and how to live in it."

**March 6, 2017, Elli Pensa:** "But from what does the ideology qualifies? According to Theodosius Pelegrini's dictionary of the philosophy in the corresponding entry with the word 'ideology' generally meant a set of ideas, concepts and positions, operating as a single system, which is displayed as the true picture of the reality. Those who adopt it are required to think and regulate their lives in accordance with it. All '*ISMS*' are basically ideologies and are inherently dogmatic and metaphysical i.e, they are based on unproven mental schemata (patterns of thought) which perceive as a reality relegating the material reality at the level of a caricature of these mental schemata. | The ideologies are necessarily causal and teleological. This means that they admit a purpose which necessarily tends the universe, and by extension the society and the human . The purpose has been placed by a Creator or a dire necessity in the sequence of events. As owners of the absolute truth the ideologues do not tolerate and do not discuss the opinion of the others in the sense that if someone is not with us is against us . This is the logic of the black and white of good and evil that flows from the principle of the excluded third of Aristotle. So it is common that the ideologues are using in their confrontations the 'wooden' and negative language to sloganeering and give at their opponents characterizations and 'signs' that have nothing to do with reality, leading of the demonization of them. | So the frequent outcome of the ideologies and the religions which are also ideologies, is the obsession and the fanaticism, leading to the blind passion and hatred against any claims and opinions different from their own beliefs. | The ideologue simply believes in his chimeras without seeking evidence and documentation for the object of his faith. The result of this attitude of ideologues and their inability to submit events to the suffering of sober calculation and judgment, based on the reality data that are available. They are the same people who become easy victims of propaganda or interests that the ideologies exploit to gain social and political power promoting their selfish purposes. | At the level of politics, the ideologues discounted each real problem of society as an ideological resulting sterile and endless debates with their opponents, so eventually the real problem to drag on, to be forgotten and remain unresolved. (Eg the immigration issue) | Another principle by Aristotle which is also in the

background of Modern politics and not just a perception, is the Golden mean or the middle way that someone should choose to resolve issues and avoid extreme judgments. This translated into politics issues, as the tendency to round the things and issues in order to gain common acceptance. Or taking vague positions on the key issues, and requiring groundbreaking solutions. The proposed solutions, usually foggy and long fruitless, to leave ostensibly at least, just to be all the people satisfied. Always follow the consensus and not to go into ruptures. Always take into account in decision making so-called political cost. Ultimately they're doing nothing! Other expressions deriving from the Golden Rule is the non-existent average person, the apolitical middle ground and so on. The decision by that politician Metaxas to dismiss the Italian ultimatum and put Greece in the throes of war was an extreme decision. But how many Greeks would argue that it was a correct decision? But it is true that it would be grossly unjust if Aristotle ascribed to him the apotheosis of mediocrity that characterizes Modern society! | And the Epicurean philosophy? This is not an ideology. There is not Epicurean-ISM. Because this philosophy is neither inspired the Modern politics but often defamed when was not ignored by the spiritual leadership. Never in the Constitution of Greece has provided as the purpose the Well-Being citizens, as it has provided in the US Constitution. It is true that the Epicurean philosophy has been characterized dogmatic because it rejects a priori divine intervention in Nature, divine providence and the immortality of the soul. But this conclusion leads after thorough research and observation of Nature. Certainly the Epicurean position is less dogmatic than the position of Plato and the idealists through the centuries of the purely mental constructs and have supported their whole philosophical edifice on unsubstantiated beliefs."

**January 18, 2018, Elli Pensa:** "...Firstly I would like to start from the usage of the words and their concepts. It is right to be called as 'Epicurean Philosophy', and not as 'Epicureanism'. Since, it is a philosophy that examines all the issues that have to do with the reality of our life in the basis of the Study of Nature, and not an ideological system with the suffix *-ism* that examines abstract things with abstract goals. As for the word 'meditation' the first word that comes to my mind is the epilogue in the [Epicurus' letter to Menoecus](#) that says: *'Meditate therefore on these things and things akin to them night and day by yourself; and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, but you shall live like a god among men. For a man who lives among immortal blessings is not like unto a mortal being'*. So, you have to start your reading from the letter to Menoecus, that is his Ethics, as in the same time you connect the Ethics, with his Physics and his Canon. Thanks :)"

**Elli later elaborates, when challenged by a newer group member:** "Epicurean-ISM ?? What is this ?? In my Greek language, I do not use this term for Epicurean Philosophy. Please, do not grasp this genuine Philosophy and making it as a closed system of an ideology. Epicurean philosophy is a cosmotheasis and a way of life in accordance to the whole Nature. It does not deserve to call as Epicurean-*ism*. Thanks."

**October 14, 2018, Elli Pensa:** "I warned you, with my epicurean honesty: Run fast away and keep out from any word that has the suffix *-ism*. Since, it's a system, it's an obsession, and it's a

dark jail!"

**November 2018, Elli Pensa:** "Well, as we both use the same methodology of thinking and acting, i.e. the Canon, for examining any issue like the '*commercialism* or *consumerism*' we do not condemn it or approving by saying that is good or not good, bad or not bad, right or not right. We examine the phenomena and the causes that caused them, in accordance with our experiences and their consequences. As we start our thoughts from the same beginning we say that the '*commercialism* or *consumerism*' is a system that is already based on ideologies of -isms i.e. ideologies ready made for the MASSES. And any -ism, for us the epicureans, constrains our thoughts for making right conclusions in accordance with the reality. | So, if we want to examine the issues in accordance with Nature and our philosophy, we will realize that the consequences and the results of the *commercialism/consumerism*, as a choice in life, it becomes from such kind of persons that their thoughts and actions are already based on false philosophies and false religions that condemn the pleasure as the real goal, as they condemn the feelings / emotions of human beings. Since they want obedient and blind persons living in apathy, doing their duty, for buying any illusion without any second thought. And they buy any illusion preferring the fantastic, because they can't bear the reality, as it is."

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## **Post by “Eikadistes” of November 24, 2019 at 2:12 PM**

(cont.)

**December 25, 2018, Elli Pensa:** "...IMO it's not right to use for Epicurean Philosophy the term '*Epicurean-ism*'. If we use this term that means also that we realize the Epicurean Philosophy as a closed system of an ideology that has a leader and followers. Since Epicurean Philosophy has for its first principles the uniqueness of the person, and not the masses...thus, there is the conclusion that there is no any need to proselytize the masses. Here Epicurus is clear: He says that he does not compromise with the common opinions, for reaping the frequent praise of the many."

**Hiram elaborates upon the question posed to Elli:** "...you should remember that *ego-ism* is, after all, an *ISM* and like all *idealisms* it's ineffective to understand Epicurean philosophy. '*Ethical Egoism*' also implies that to be ethical must exclude all altruism, and vice versa. These '*isms*' are not good at explaining the nature of things because my advantage may not be mutually exclusive from the advantage of others, and my faculties are very good at discerning this. Pleasure, you have to understand, is a FACULTY, not an abstraction, or an *ism*. If I have one beer I may experience it as pleasant, but if I have another one and a third one my FACULTY of pleasure may inform me that it's no longer pleasant. It's the same object of sensation: a beer. But it's experienced differently. And so you must train yourself to philosophize with your

feet on the ground and using your faculties."

**May 16, 2019, Cassius Amicus:** "Epicurean philosophy is not just another '*ism*' to read some ice-cold commentary and then put back on the shelf."

**May 29, 2019, Elli Pensa:** "...Democracy that is a constitution which declares: 'all we have one unique life and the right to live in happiness and pleasure in this world and not in somewhere else'. | Democracy can't be blossomed in tyranny and oligarchy by the few that press the many. But the many i.e. the mob are responsible for being pressed by the few, because due to their spiritual and bodily lethargy, and anesthesia, and due to cowardice, and due to suspicion, and due to fears, and due to misery, and due to all these that provoke great pain in the ass they go behind as blind followers, and as a donkey for a carrot, for finding saviors or spiritual food of movements/ideologies like '*Global-ism*', '*Human-ism*', '*Existensia-ism*', '*Capital-ism*', '*Newliberal-ism*', '*Commun-ism*', '*Social-ism*', '*Christian-ism*', '*Islam-ism*', '*Juda-ism*', '*Buddh-ism*', '*Stoic-ism*' etc etc. And all of them what they need ? MONEY, FOLLOWERS, and POWER. Ideologies, false philosophies, and religions all have one common thing for being recognizable in a minute: the suffix *-ism*, and are eggs of the same snake. Beware of the snake that born its eggs all over the world, without end."

**June 2, 2019, Alex Rios offers a counter-point:** "The intolerance of '*Epicureanism*' by Epicureans. | Some folks here insist that other folks say 'Epicurean Philosophy' instead of saying '*Epicureanism*'. They say that '*isms*' are closed systems, that '*isms*' are ideologies. The dictionary does not seem to agree with them about the meaning of '*-ism*'. So why the intolerance? The whole world says *Epicureanism*, but the folks here should not? Meanwhile the dictionary has as a synonym for 'philosophy' the word 'ideology', so a philosophy is an ideology."

**In response, Domagoj Vaci replies:** "An *-ism* (ideology) implies something 'problematic', pernicious like a virus, a social disease, propaganda and so on, while not labeling something an ideology implies something benign, obviously beneficial and thus nothing to be concerned about. However the French structuralist Louis Althusser argued in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' that captives of ideology are never able to recognize their own ideological convictions as ideological. The dominant ideology is as invisible to believers as the air they breathe: 'what thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology ... ideology never says, 'I am ideological'".

**END**

## Post by “Cassius” of November 24, 2019 at 3:17 PM

Wow that's great memory and/or record-keeping Nate -- thanks!

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## Post by “Joshua” of November 24, 2019 at 5:02 PM

I've yet to register an opinion on the -ism question; as Nate has put forth a comprehensive effort at surveying the field, I'll offer it here.

To put it simply—I suppose I mean by that, *To put it frankly*: I haven't found the objections to this usage persuasive, and I doubt whether I can be bothered to police myself in the matter! ☐

I will unhesitatingly grant to our Hellenic friends the etymological point. I share their concerns regarding affinities in language, and I think I can appreciate—at least in outline—their objection to the imported feel of what ought to taste (from their perspective) like a native vintage. It strikes the wrong note, so to speak. I get that. Like grafting Old World vines onto New World rootstock.

And yet for all that, I simply cannot warm to the alternative. A few reasons come to mind.

### 1. It's inelegant

This is possibly the most bothersome quality. "Epicureanism" to a native English ear sounds very natural. "Epicurean Philosophy" sounds like it was designed by committee. Worse, it sounds like even the committee got tired of saying it, and switched to "EP" before the meeting was adjourned. Worse still, they didn't know—couldn't know—that when they were overheard speaking of EP, it sounded to the casual observer as if they were discussing, with hushed tones, an embarrassing medical condition.

### 2. It plays like a shell game

When the preachers of Creationism got tired of getting laughed out of every courtroom in America, they did what we're doing; they dropped the -ism. Intelligent Design was the new PR slogan, and that too was roundly panned. But with one important difference: "creationism" had an ancient and venerable, albeit wholly misguided, philosophical pedigree. They could claim among their number no less a scientist than Isaac Newton. By contrast, "Intelligent Design" is cheap and tawdry; a sleazy rules-lawyer trick. Richard Dawkins' proposal to replace "atheists" with "Brights" was comparably silly. Creationism, atheism, and Epicureanism are perfectly serviceable words. To agitate for their replacement, rightly or wrongly, is to immediately put

one's motives under suspicion.

### **3. It's a colorless abstraction**

Now, there's nothing wrong with abstraction. Under certain circumstances it actually makes sense to speak in those terms. "Epicurean Philosophy", like "concussion protocol" or "Jeffersonian democracy", is a fitting term to use in an academic sense. One could write a book about "Epicurean Philosophy". One could teach a course, or chair a panel on "Epicurean Philosophy" at a Classical Antiquities conference.

But that just isn't my relationship with the school of Epicurus! I do study Epicurean Philosophy, but that is secondary to my main interest; I am a follower of Epicureanism. We can talk about ideology and labels, but I don't see this as a weakness. I have vetted this school, approved it, found it worthy above every comparable human effort; like Lucretius—like Diogenes of Oenoanda—I have nailed my colors to the mast. On some deeper-than-intellectual level, it pleases me to think of some continuity between myself and the numberless ancient Epicureans whose dust lies scattered in forgotten tombs.

Well, that went on rather long! I am aware of holding the minority view on the question, and I don't mean to convey the impression that I am bothered by the group preference. I certainly have no intention of forcing the point! But the argument as compiled by Nate has persisted for at least five years, and it may be of service to have this response on hand. It might aid in understanding some of the resistance, at least.

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### **Post by “Joshua” of November 24, 2019 at 5:08 PM**

<https://www.theonion.com/i-don-t-fit-in...-box-1824207087>

Here's some satire that came to memory as I was writing, re: -isms and ideologies

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### **Post by “Cassius” of November 24, 2019 at 7:41 PM**

Personally I am somewhere in the middle on this myself. I see the point being made by Elli and Haris (I had forgotten that Haris joined in on this, and I am really glad Nate reminded me of that. It is helpful validation to have TWO Greeks who are proficient in English to make the same observation) . I tend to think that the Greeks sense something deeper going on, and that the

English ear is being tuned by something in the background that needs to be identified and resisted. (Yes, I can feel my "all Brits are Stoic" antenna coming into play even though that is my own heritage.)

But Joshua's point is correct too - In normal ordinary conversation I think that most English speakers (at least Americans) probably consider the terms "Epicurean Philosophy" and "Epicureanism" to be absolute equivalents. For that reason the effort to distinguish the two rings somewhat false and weird in American ears.

But maybe this is an area that the English-speakers have by force of habit accepted a viewpoint on "isms" that ought not be accepted in the first place. Even though the "ism" suffix does have a negative connotation in English, it is used interchangeably as designating any system --- perhaps that is part of the problem? Why use a negative term as an equivalent to a term that ought to be positive or at least neutral? (Is it possible that we have absorbed some kind of British cynicism / eclecticism that we need to root out and trample underfoot?)

Maybe any use of an "ism" ought to have an absolutely negative connotation, as it appears to have in Greek, and any use of that suffix ought to be clearly understood to be used as a denunciation.

Now the fact of the matter is that most Americans won't understand that point immediately - but maybe that is something that we all profit if we point out to them.

So while I agree with Joshua that the effort to distinguish sounds weird in English, I do think there is an issue here that can be helpful to address.

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### **Post by "Joshua" of November 24, 2019 at 8:19 PM**

I am VERY sympathetic to the idea that our Greek friends should have 'naming rights'! It's just a difficult transition. Out of curiosity I thumbed through DeWitt while I wrote that post. He must use "Epicureanism" a hundred times in that book; since that's the academic text "of record" in our circle, the problem is unlikely to go away.

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### **Post by "Elayne" of November 25, 2019 at 9:09 PM**

I don't use the *ism* version because it sounds very clunky to me-- the sound is unattractive, and the *ism* doesn't even sound like it belongs with the rest of the word but is instead weirdly tacked on.

"Epicurean" has a pleasing and more elegant sound. "Epicurean Philosophy" has a smooth, rhythmic rise and fall. "I am Epicurean" instead of "I practice Epicureanism." That's just my subjective opinion. But Elli's explanation strengthens my dislike of the *ism* form.

EP is just bc of typing with a finger on the phone-- I read it as Epicurean Philosophy the same as I read "because" for bc, "in my opinion" for IMO, and so on.

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## Post by “Eikadistes” of November 26, 2019 at 12:57 AM

### On "***Epicureanism***" and "***Epicurean Philosophy***"

I've been researching ancient Greek etymology, and have thought a lot about this over the last few days (*especially with the anticipation that I'll be collaborating with Charles and Hiram, and release the aforementioned meme on **r/Epicurean\_Philosophy**, knowing that the 9,000+ members of the **r/Epicureanism** group on Reddit will have questions regarding the differences between our chosen vocabularies*).

Herein, I conclude that "***Epicureanism***" is **NOT** an appropriate expression of our *natural philosophy*, and - especially rendered through modern English - "*Epicureanism*" is **NOT** an appropriate expression of Epicurus' *observations*.

Our Greek friends **Harris Demitiadis** and **Elli** have presented us with valuable insights into the origins of our terminology, thus, providing us with additional tools through which we can examine our discourse. *Admittedly*, I have **NOT** *really* grasped the key nuances of their points (which I *now* believe I have come to understand), so I took it upon myself to deconstruct our terminology with the intention of gaining a fresh perspective toward the natural world.

I'd like to start with an etymological investigation. I hope that this investigation provides insight to my fellow English-**only**-speakers (I, myself, am monolingual), and - **please** - Elli, if I misinterpret the language, re-direct my mistakes!

### **-ISMs**

As Alex Rios once observed, our English suffix, "***-ism***" is - *correctly*, according to **both** common and academic usages in Modern English - employed to mean a distinctive "doctrine", "theory",

"attitude", "belief", "practice", "process", "state", "condition", "religion", "system", or – as he has cited, with **fair** reason – "**philosophy**". According to this widespread definition, it is **not** unreasonable to suppose that adding a simple "**-ism**" at the end of "*the philosophy of Epicurus*" should, *appropriately and accurately*, render the word "**Epicureanism**", (or even "**Epicurism**").

In more succinct terms, we can visualize "**Epicurean-ism**" as "**Epicurean-philosophy**".

This works for practical purposes, and – as I'm sure you would agree – no one in this thread, or this forum, or this webpage will be misled by my meaning if I replace "**Epicurean-ism**" as "**Epicurean-philosophy**", or vis a versa. **HOWEVER**, in doing so, I propose that we are missing out an an important teaching opportunity that has been lost in translation.

## **-ISMVS**

Our tradition of adding "**-ism**" to the end of words – in which we express distinctive "**philosophies**" – begins in the post-Classical period, corresponding to the *Renaissance*, the cultural "*rebirth*" of systems and ideas from the ancient world, translated through the **Latin** language, using the Roman alphabet, sheathing ancient Greek observations.

*(I'm going to call this tradition – in which **ALL** English-speakers partake – the "**Ism-ism**", or, in other words, "the systemic practice of adding '-ism' to idea-expressing words". We are **ALL**, necessarily, **Ismists** in some respect.)*

From the perspective of the contemporary world, the suffix "**-ismus**" was borrowed from the *Old Latin* language of the Romans, and appropriated by post-Classical (and Modern) peoples when using *New Latin* and *Contemporary Latin*. For centuries, our adherence to **Ismism** has been helped European thinkers minimize the losses that occur in translation. We find an abundance of "**-ism**" and "**-ismus**" in **both** *Romance* and *Germanic* language families, and – as with Latin – they express the meaning of distinctive "doctrines", "theories", "attitudes", "beliefs", and "**philosophies**".

**Here**, *however*, is where we note a difference that our Mediterranean friends have often observed: while the **Greek** language, like **Celtic**, and **Indic** languages, has evolved from a common Indo-European root, these languages have **NOT** adopted Latin conventions the same way that have *Romance* and *Germanic* languages. In the unique case of the Greeks, *Latin* was – as I'm sure is **more** than obvious to us all – heavily influenced by the *parent* of ancient Greek.

## **-ίζω | -izō | -ize**

According to my research, we receive the Latin "**-ismus**" from the ancient Greek "**-ισμός**" ("**-ismós**"), which, *itself*, is a bracketing of two *other* ancient Greek words, those words being "**-ίζω**" ("**-ízō**") and "**-μός**" ("**-mós**"). We'll start with the former word, first. The suffix "**-ίζω**" ("**-ízō**") was added to nouns to form new verbs. Let's look at (x3) examples:

### **1. κανονίζω – kanónízō – canonize**

κανων (kanón) – literally referred to a “**reed**”, and *connotatively* implied a “**measuring rod**” or “**standard**”.

+ “-ίζω” (“-ízō” or “-ize”) renders “**κανονίζω**” or “**canonize**”, meaning “**to make standard**”.

### 2. ἑλληνίζω - Hállēnízō - Hellenize

Ἑλλην (Hállēn) – literally referred to that which is “**Greek**”.

+ “-ίζω” (“-ízō” or “-ize”) renders “**ἑλληνίζω**” or “**Hellenize**”, meaning “**to make Greek**”.

### 3. συγχρονίζω - súnkhronosízō - synchronize

σύγχρονος (súnkhronos) - literally referred to “**synchronous**”

+ “-ίζω” (“-ízō” or “-ize”) renders “**συγχρονίζω**” or “**synchronize**”, meaning “**to make synchronous**”.

The key point with “-ίζω” (“-ízō”) – and our Modern English suffix “-ize” – is that we can turn any word into a verb, or, in more philosophically interesting terms, we can **ACTIVATE** it.

### -μός | -μός

The second suffix from which the ancient Greek “-ισμός” (“-ismós”) was bracketed is “-μός” (“-mós”). Contrary to the convention of **ACTIVATING** a word that *represents a concept*, adding (“-mós”) **ABSTRACTS** an *action*. We can demonstrate this convention through (x3) more examples that translate well into Modern English:

#### 1. σαρκασμός - sarkasmós - sarcasm

σαρκάζω (sarkázō) – literally, and **figuratively** meant “**tearing apart**” or “**to tear off the flesh**”.

+ “-μός” (“-mós”) renders “**σαρκασμός**” or “**sarcasm**”, meaning “**(figuratively) tearing apart**”.

#### 2. συλλογισμός - sullogismós - syllogism

συλλογίζομαι (sullogízomai) – literally meant “**to compute**” or “**to infer**”.

+ “-μός” (“-mós”) renders “**συλλογισμός**” or “**syllogism**”, meaning a “*computation*” or an “*inference*”.

#### 3. κατακλυσμός - kataklusmós - cataclysm

κατακλύζω (kataklúzō) – literally meant “**to wash away**”.

+ “-μός” (“-mós”) renders “**κατακλυσμός**” or “**cataclysm**”, meaning a “*great flood*”.

The key point with "-μός" ("-mós") is that the ancient Greeks could turn any **active verb** into a word that expressed an *abstract concept*, or, in other words, it could *systematize* phenomenal activity into an *idea*.

**-ισμός | -ismós | -ism**

As I have come to understand it, the re-bracketing of the suffix "-μός" ("-mós"), appended with "-ίζω" ("-ízō") presents us with "-ισμός" ("-ismós") or "-ism", a convention which *systematizes a verb that has been activated from a noun*. I was only able to identify five instances of this in ancient Greek, only (x1) of which provides a suitable example:

**σάββατον** - sabbaton - literally, the "**Sabbath**" (borrowed from the Hebrew "שַׁבָּת" or "šabbāt")

**σαββατίζω** - sabbatízō - meaning "**to make, observe, or keep the Sabbath**"

**σαββατισμός** - sabbatismós - meaning "**the making, observing, or keeping of the Sabbath**"

As I mentioned before, unlike the "-ismus" of Latin, and the "-ism" of Modern English, the ancient Greek "-ismos" is almost **NEVER** used. The ancient Greeks – whose **tremendous** influence on our own intellectual conventions **cannot** be overstated – do *not* seem to have shared our tradition of **Ismism**.

Here, I'll employ a phrase I first read in a translation of Heidegger's *Being and Time*: that phrase is **originary language**. Based on my above research, it seems to me that the ancient Greeks – when faced with the need to express a **NEW** word with **FRESH** meaning – built the words that would fill their minds and guide their anticipations from *either* (1) the names of people and objects they observed, *or* (2) active forces they experienced, but **NOT** (3) abstract systems.

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**Post by "Eikadistes" of November 26, 2019 at 12:58 AM**

**So, why NOT "Epicureanism"?**

The path to wisdom **demands** that we **experience nature directly** and **NOT indirectly** as an abstract system. In other words – *to connect the last few paragraphs* – we should **NEVER** reduce the immediacy of our experiences to a mere "-ism"; were we to make the mistake of **isming** our individual experiences, and the **anticipations** that develop from that **FRESH** experience, we will have stunted our own development on the path to wisdom.

Furthermore, while we may all sincerely admire the person of Epicurus, and delight in the historical texts that resulted from the activity of his Garden, **our** path to wisdom – unlike every other **-ismic** school of thought – is neither dependent upon allegiance to a centralizing leader, nor upon a golden age of history, nor upon a doctrinal institution. *Christianity* could not have existed without *Christ and his mythic Kingdom of Heaven*. *Platonism* could not have existed without *Plato and his mythic World of Forms*. *Stoicism* could not have existed without the *Stoics and their Cosmic Virtue*. Were these figures never to have existed, no one would have ever truly experienced the fantasies of their mythic promises.

Our **EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY** – the natural, undeniable pursuit of pleasure – is not dependent upon Epicurus to have ever existed, *because*, Nature, itself, is so much larger, more important, and more fundamental than his historical personage. Without the man we call "Epicurus", we still would have sensed the energetic environment of particles around us, felt the churning of feelings of pleasure and pain within us, and anticipated the consequences of our choices. Even if the "**Epicur-**" part of our philosophy were missing from our language, the philosophy, itself, would be the same. Vocabulary aside, the wise person would still engage the natural world, and pursue pleasure to its fullest.

"**Epicureanism**" (or, also, "**Epicurism**") carries a connotation – albeit *very slightly* – that our path to wisdom is *just another -ism*, comparable to other doctrinal institutions, that is useful **ONLY** as an abstract system, advertised to misguided masses who must accept unverifiable truths that have been promised by an unknowable super-person. It is not quite as purposeful to call ourselves "**Epicureanists**" who follow "**Epicureanism**" as it is to identify as "**Epicureans**" who pursue "**Epicurean philosophy**", the **natural path to wisdom**. The tools for our endeavor rest within our own, natural bodies; **Nature, itself**, is the greatest teacher, not "religion", or any other idealisms.

Now, *all this being said*, for practical purposes, there most **certainly** isn't **anything** inherently wrong about employing the term "**Epicureanism**". The "**Epicurean-**" part is still the same, and an "**-ism**" could just mean a "**philosophy**" which, in Modern English, correctly indicates our loving of wisdom, apart from any oath to a mythic principle. Nonetheless, I will personally choose to write "Epicurean philosophy" whenever possible, to keep my anticipations **FRESH**, to indicate to other, natural beings that our interactions are bigger than *disembodied souls paddling ideas back and forth in a court of Mind*, and to remind myself that our path to wisdom is not a map that has been given to us from an eternal place of perfection, but that we each carry a well-calibrated compass within ourselves that knows the world, and guides us to happiness.

*(One more, quick, closing thought: no one on this planet deserves the title of "Epicurean" more than a happy dog, and – ironically – they will always be incapable of assigning that title, or receiving it).*

## **Post by “Cassius” of November 26, 2019 at 3:18 AM**

Outstanding work Nate! Well reasoned and persuasive!

Are you pasting that into Reddit or providing a link to here, perhaps setting up a new thread with one of these as the first post ? I probably should mention that the current default "style" here is light, and I bet you are using dark, as the use of the yellow fonts is fairly hard to see on the white background.

But this is great work and I feel sure [Elli](#) will approve!

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## **Post by “Elli” of November 26, 2019 at 5:42 AM**

Sorry, but you always forget to examine all the issues for jumping freely from Physics to Canon and to Ethics and vice versa. These three are firmly bonded and united and of course they are such, for the achievement of the goal of pleasure.

We are not idealists that made all the ideas as a system/frame with steady idealistic/imagined pictures of their minds that are the root of all -ISMS. And may this of my insistence will be proved one day. And if Dewitt would be here to realize how things are going, would understand what I mean and maybe he will change his mind for being agreed on that issue. I beg you for so many times to not call Epicurean Philosophy as Epicurean-ism, Physics, Canon, and Ethics can't be systematized since no one is able to close the whole Nature in a box and in a frame with imagined pictures that exist in the minds of people - and are also steady and without motion.

We epicureans do speak for atoms and fields that have energy, and are doing all the motions and swerves, as well as, the Nature of All Things are developing and evolving without end. We speak for constant measurement through the Canon and then we unite the Ethics with the Canon and Physics. For what is in our times our natural and necessary won't be the same in the era of Epicurus. Epicurus will be found many things that are useful today as his natural and necessary too i.e. the electricity power, the internet and so many discoveries.

Thus, this is our philosophy and please give its place in the 21st century that follows that many other discoveries will be done and the right philosophy is needed to many persons that are like-minded with us. I do not know how else to convince you on this issue.

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## **Post by “Elli” of November 26, 2019 at 5:54 AM**

I wrote the above my message before I've read this article-work by Nate. Nate, my friend, you astonished me ! Thanks a lot that you understood and proved through your words of what I insist to say so many times and for a long period of time.



All these things, Pythocles, you must bear in mind; for thus you will escape in most things from Myths and will be enabled to understand what is akin to them. And most of all give yourself up to the study of the beginnings and of infinity and of the things akin to them, and also of the criteria of truth and of the feelings, and of the purpose for which we reason out these things. For these points when they are thoroughly studied will most easily enable you to understand the causes of the details. But those who have not thoroughly taken these things to heart could not rightly study them in themselves, nor have they made their own the reason for observing them.



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## Post by “Joshua” of November 26, 2019 at 7:50 AM

Quote

*Furthermore, while we may all sincerely admire the person of Epicurus, and delight in the historical texts that resulted from the activity of his Garden, **our** path to wisdom – unlike every other **-ismic** school of thought – is neither dependent upon allegiance to a centralizing leader, nor upon a golden age of history, nor upon a doctrinal institution.*

We should ask those schools; they have a different opinion. There is not one of them that wouldn't plead the same or a similar case. Or the same case couched in different terms. I know for a certainty from personal experience that in Buddhism the argument is identical; that instead of Buddhism, many would prefer *Buddhadharma* (Sanskrit) or *-dhamma* (Pali).

"Stop calling [my belief] an -ism!"

[Buddhism](#)

[Christianity](#)

[Mohammedanism](#)

[Humanism](#)

[Capitalism](#)

[Marxism](#)

[Judaism](#)

Sometimes it goes the other way. Taking a word, and weaponizing the -ism.

[Islamism](#)

[Atheism](#)

And, what is for me the most droll article of piffle to have made my acquaintance; [I hate religion, but love Jesus](#)

Anti-ismism is a cottage industry! Ironically, the only school I searched but can't find an example in is Stoicism. This, despite the fact that Stoicism 1.) Also comes from Greek, and therefore enjoys the blessings of our own etymological arguments, and 2.) Is one of the only

schools not to have been named after a person.

I don't know about all of you, but I find this sort of thing tedious. I suspect that Lucian, for one—an equal opportunity lampooner of pretense—would have seen right through it.

It pleases me inordinately to hear in DeWitt, as an example, of the "spread of Epicureanism". If it was the "spread of Epicurean philosophy", I wouldn't know what that meant; does that mean that the books are spread, like Gideon bibles, with no one reading them? But "Epicureanism" is unmistakable. It doesn't mean scrolls or sages; it means people. An Attic potter molding a krater. A Roman soldier marching in Gaul. A Corinthian fisherman taking in the morning catch from the Aegean; and all bound in brotherhood by devotion to the school of Epicurus.

And in the same spirit...I'll leave it there! Candor has its place, but so does good humor and good nature. I once witnessed an exchange with a believer in Young-Earth Creationism. The interlocutor replied that "no, [he] believed in Old-Earth Accretionism". I laughed so hard I almost fell off the chair!

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### **Post by “Elayne” of November 26, 2019 at 7:57 AM**

Lol, Joshua... my aesthetic distaste for the sound of ism, which sounds like a person is strangling when trying to swallow something, leads me to suggest DeWitt could have spoken of the spread of Epicureans or Epicurean groups, because that focuses on the people involved.

I don't find this discussion tedious, but I definitely think it is best suited for a group which understands the philosophy already.

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### **Post by “Joshua” of November 26, 2019 at 8:08 AM**

Oh, I don't mean to imply that I am finding *this* discussion tedious. I continue to think Nate and Elli are making fair points.

But to say, for example, that Christianity is a relationship, not a religion, is to fortress one's opinion with something like an inverse Kafka-trap; they want to control the terms so that definitionally they can't be argued against—and I find *that* tedious.

## **Post by “Cassius” of November 26, 2019 at 8:13 AM**

I want to look at some of Joshua's links and comment further. I am sure that I agree with the central point being made by Elli / Haris / Nate, but I also experience my own feelings that people I otherwise find to be reasonable might find the distinction to be overly fine. As I see it we have a "usage" issue which is very contextually dependent, and also a deeper philosophical issue about attitudes toward the nature and use of system-building which is extremely important and should not be dealt with strictly with terminology. I need to think about this further. Nate's article, with it's in-depth approach, is the way I am thinking - in other words explain in-depth what the issue is without necessarily saying that it is a bright line that must be followed by every person in every instance. In particular, I think that to make the distinction quickly, in a situation where you don't have time to explain what you are talking about, can come across as committing the "sins" that Joshua is concerned about.

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## **Post by “Joshua” of November 26, 2019 at 8:23 AM**

You've put that extremely well, Cassius!

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## **Post by “Elli” of November 26, 2019 at 9:59 AM**

Epicurean-ism is a school-ism of philosoph-ism that has for its main cores :

Pleasure-ism that is based on virtues as Prundenc-ism, Justic-ism, Honor-ism, Benefit-ism with Friendship-ism, among friendists!

And you want more ? If you say Epicurean-ism without the word as << philosophy>> it is right then, people to think : Ah, this is a mainstream with kitchens with good food and wine!

As for stoicism they did well to make their system and name it from "stoa poikele" i.e. from wall and stones as its people are bricks and stones living in apathy i.e. without passions ! And this is their evolution : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRNMVeOOPwc> 😊

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**Post by “Joshua” of November 26, 2019 at 10:04 AM**

Quote

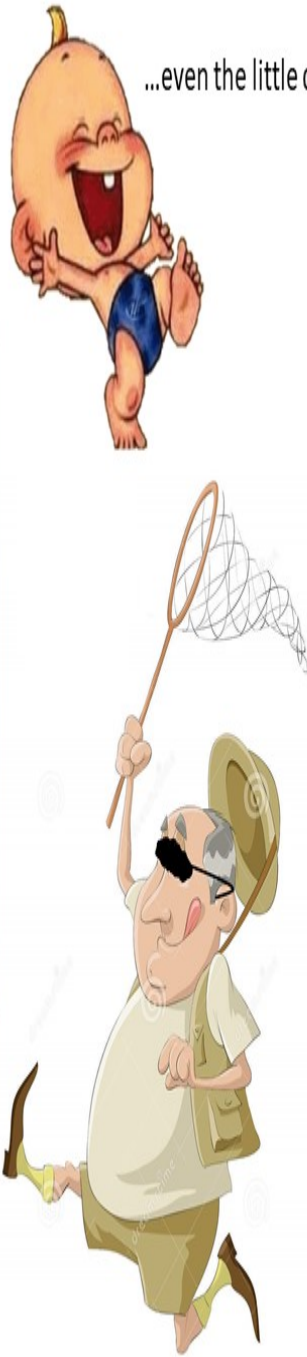
And you want more ? If you say Epicurean-ism without the word as << philosophy>> it is right then, people to think : Ah, this is a mainstream with kitchens with good food and wine!

Ok, this is an excellent point! Those people have almost completely ruined search engine utility re: "Epicurean"

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**Post by “Elli” of November 26, 2019 at 10:05 AM**

...even the little children are Laughing Out Loud!



I summon you to the constant pleasures and not to the empty, trifling and agitated virtues that have the fruits of hope.

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**Post by “Elli” of November 26, 2019 at 10:15 AM**



in ancient India. Along this line of thinking, we should remember that every other belief, tradition, attitude, or religion will apply the same sort of linguistic revision: for **Christians**, *Adam* and *Eve* were the first **Christians**; for **Muslims**, they were the first Muslims; and in the example listed above, modern atheists will happily identify members of the ancient Indian tradition of **अपिच(ह)ārvāka** as "atheists", even though some of the contextual nuances of **Cārvāka** will be lost in translation. For that matter, many of our friends who have adopted the term "**atheist**" may misinterpret ancient Greek philosophers who were not using **ἄθεος**, which, at the time, would not have been explicitly used to refute the idea of "God" as we understand it (being framed in a Christian world).

In our effort to identify **FRESH** expressions from - what I mentioned *Heidegger* called - **originally language**, all **-isms** will necessarily be removed from the context of the language in which they first arose. They will **ALWAYS** be rooted in the the Modern European tradition of **Ismism**, the tradition of categorizing *other peoples'* cultural traditions from the "*enlightened*" perspective of "*objective*" academics. Therefor, referring to **any** wisdom tradition around the globe (whether it be the offensive "**Mohammedanism**" or the much more neutral "**Buddhism**"), will *usually* be seen, in one way or another, as being derogatory to practitioners of that religion, adherents to that tradition, or philosophers of that position.

So, like Josh mentions, my analysis can also - quite reasonably, **and responsibly** - be applied to the other **-isms**, especially if we're trying to analyze our misinterpretations using linguistic *deconstruction*. That being said, for the purposes of using Reddit as a forum to introduce others to *our pleasure-based tradition*, I still think it would be good practice to avoid using **Epicureanism** whenever possible, as a means of confronting the fact that *the study of nature using our feelings, senses, and anticipations* is **far-removed** from the **idealism** of every other tradition. In this case, I think we can argue without seeming derogatory to others, that our tradition is **NOT** an ideology, just like the enterprise of science is not an ideology; whereas *Abrahamic, Dharmic, and Platonic* traditions require a sense of *faith* that an eternal, identity exists that is separate from the world of physics, only accessible to us **NOW** as an idea contained within our minds.

Hiram has used this critique before, but I'll re-iterate, that a succinct way to condense the lengthy points I've explored is simply to say that "*we reject ideology*" (defined as "*systems of the ideal*"). In this case, if you'll excuse my continued **isming**, "**Idealism**" can be seen as the prototypical **-ism** amongst all other **-isms**.

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**Post by "Eikadistes" of November 26, 2019 at 12:27 PM**

...all **THAT** being said, I think I may need to think on this a little more deeply to digest the terms "**Realism**", "**Naturalism**", "**Materialism**", and "**Hedonism**", since – according to my own definition – those, *too*, should be "*systems of the ideal*" if they are "**-isms**" at all, which they most certainly are, but also, are not. I think all of my thinking should be tempered against the fact that we can still employ "**Epicureanism**" in an appropriate, and meaningful way, without succumbing to **Idealism**.

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### Post by “Godfrey” of November 26, 2019 at 4:49 PM

Just to add a totally non scholarly two cents worth: when I encounter an ism, I tend to ask "what are the fixed ideas that this contains". When I think of a philosophy, or when I'm operating from inside of an ism, I tend to think more in terms of a living and dynamic set of ideas with which to engage.

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### Post by “Elli” of November 27, 2019 at 8:03 AM

Evge - Bravo Nate ! 👍 ...and as Epicurus, if he was alive, he would say to us as an honest grandpa : Dear my grandchildren, remember always that that : ALL-isms are the "ypolepsis" i.e. false suppositions; and not the "prolepsis" i.e. anticipations that means also intuitions with which we the human beings are born, and before those insidious who are speaking about all - isms, they are the same persons that are damaging our faculties, as given to us by Nature, which are: **our senses and feelings**. With these faculties we are able to achieve the goal of pleasure. All else is the folly that is made by those human minds who their only desire is for us living as **subordinated andrapoda** (slaves). Here is how the swerve happens, when someone realizes where and which are the obstacles to his freedom that is synonym with pleasure and eudaemonia. 😊

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### Post by “Eikadistes” of December 8, 2019 at 9:10 PM

I'm looking for clarification on the following quotation by De Witt:

## "...Epicureanism was primarily a cult of the founder..."

It goes without saying that any member of an Epicurean group who possessed the requisite self-confidence was at liberty to migrate elsewhere and undertake to organize a group of his own. In so doing, however, his relationship to prospective followers was predefined in a peculiar way, because Epicureanism was primarily a cult of the founder and his way of life and only secondarily a system of thought. Even more important than the so-called Principle Doctrines was this voluntary pledge (45, 8–11), "We will be obedient to Epicurus, according to whom we have made it our choice to live."<sup>1</sup> Underlying this is the tacit assumption that Epicurus had discovered the one and only true way of life, and that there could be only one discoverer; subsequent leaders could only guide and direct their followers along that road. In other words, the leaders were themselves followers, and their adherents were followers of followers. They differed from one another only in the degree of their advancement toward wisdom.

In discussions with Hiram and Charles about Reddit, I was re-reading a familiar passage which contradicts my assertion that Epicurus needs not to have existed for the canon of Epicurean philosophy to have been understood. Is De Witt saying this with regards to the specific behavioral norms that were set within the Gardens? [[http://societyofepicurus.com/wp-content/upl...XR\\_-7-gLKNK9bA9c](http://societyofepicurus.com/wp-content/upl...XR_-7-gLKNK9bA9c)]

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### Post by "Joshua" of December 8, 2019 at 11:45 PM

Excellent topic, Nate! He is of course using "cult" as a Classicist here, free of its modern sinister connotations.

To my mind there are two questions here. *Could the Epicurean system of thought have developed independent of Epicurus?* I should think the answer to that—at least in broad strokes—would be, "Of course!" Already in Greece, prior to Epicurus, there was atomism (Democritus), indeterminism (Aristotle), hedonism (Aristippus), and cosmic pluralism (Anaximander). There's no "secret sauce"; most of what Epicurus taught is self-evident, or else arrived at through very simple argumentation. He was merely, as DeWitt writes elsewhere, "the first to survey the whole field"; and to synthesize from it a universal world-philosophy.

And, *is there any value for the student of a system in giving honor to the founder?* Again I should answer "yes"; indeed that is Epicurus' own position, given in the Vatican Sayings;

"Honoring a sage is itself a great good to the one who honors." VS 32

But I think that position is another we could have arrived at without him. There is pleasure in the honest emotion of gratitude, if nothing else; and there is fellowship in belonging to a "school". With the Epicureans in particular, we are told that they called him *Soter* (saviour), carved him in statuary, and bore his likeness on signet rings. If Lucretius and Diogenes had not

felt this kind of devotion, the fragments surviving from the Epicurean tradition would be paltry indeed.

This begins to look like two interconnected paths to the same summit; analytical thinkers like Polyaeus and Thomas Jefferson would be happy to throw themselves into the work of studying the system. Passionate missionaries like Diogenes of Oenoanda and Frances Wright, into studying the man who wrought it. And in Lucretius, the two streams blend into something like perfection.

But here's an important point; with a religion like Christianity, devotion is the main thing and good practice is insufficient. In the system devised by Epicurus, practice is the essential key. Devotion is useful primarily for sustaining interest and emotional engagement in the practice.

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## Post by “Cassius” of December 9, 2019 at 6:34 AM

I agree with Joshua and will add more:

### [Quote from Nate](#)

my assertion that Epicurus needs not to have existed for the canon of Epicurean philosophy to have been understood.

I believe this is also a correct statement, and i don't think there is any contradiction between the two positions.

As Joshua says, the combination of ideas could have been assembled by others at other times and places. But the personality of Epicurus is what allowed that combination to be assembled at the time and the place that it was, and but for the personality of Epicurus other separate and distinct combinations would have emerged, but probably not nearly as successfully.

I think we regularly find ourselves realizing that Epicurean philosophy is a revolt against idealism and the suggestion that abstractions exist in the air without connection to reality. Epicurus was a real person with real friends, and real followers, and a philosophy that is devoted to reality has to have living breathing people involved in it. Epicurus' personality was such that it inspired devotion among his friends, and the way he conducted himself reinforced the movement.

There are all sorts of other analogies with different leaders over history that could be used to argue that their personal presence was essential for the success of their movements, and i think those observations apply to Epicurus without there being a sinister aspect. I think Joshua is right that DeWitt was using the term "cult" in an academic sense, but I do wish he had used

another word. I suspect this is another area where DeWitt slips due to his affection for Christianity. I suspect he would call Christianity a "cult" of Christ, and in his habit of analogizing the Epicurean movement with Christianity he applied the same word to Epicurus.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of December 9, 2019 at 8:53 AM**

Another thing that I think is VERY important about the role of Epicurus. From Diogenes Laertius:

"He [the wise man] will be more susceptible of emotion than other men: that will be no hindrance to his wisdom. However, not every bodily constitution nor every nationality would permit a man to become wise."

Epicurus existed in a very specific society - ancient Greece, and his philosophy prospered in a very specific society - the ancient Greco-Roman world. It has never flourished in any other society other than that one.

That's why Nate's observation is so important: YES, the ideas are available to everyone, in every society, and mixing them together is not so hard either -- but that manifestly has NOT been done by any other person, in any other society, than by Epicurus and the ancient Greco-Romans in their own circumstances. Nate's observation is proof of the statement made by Epicurus - not every nationality or "bodily constitution" is going to be fertile ground for the spread of numbers of people who follow Epicurean viewpoints.

That's not to say that there can't be individuals who adopt for themselves a mix of ideas very similar to Epicurus, but that for an Epicurean "movement" to flourish is going to take a very particular mix of people with cultural, educational, religious, and other characteristics to allow the sum total to spread.

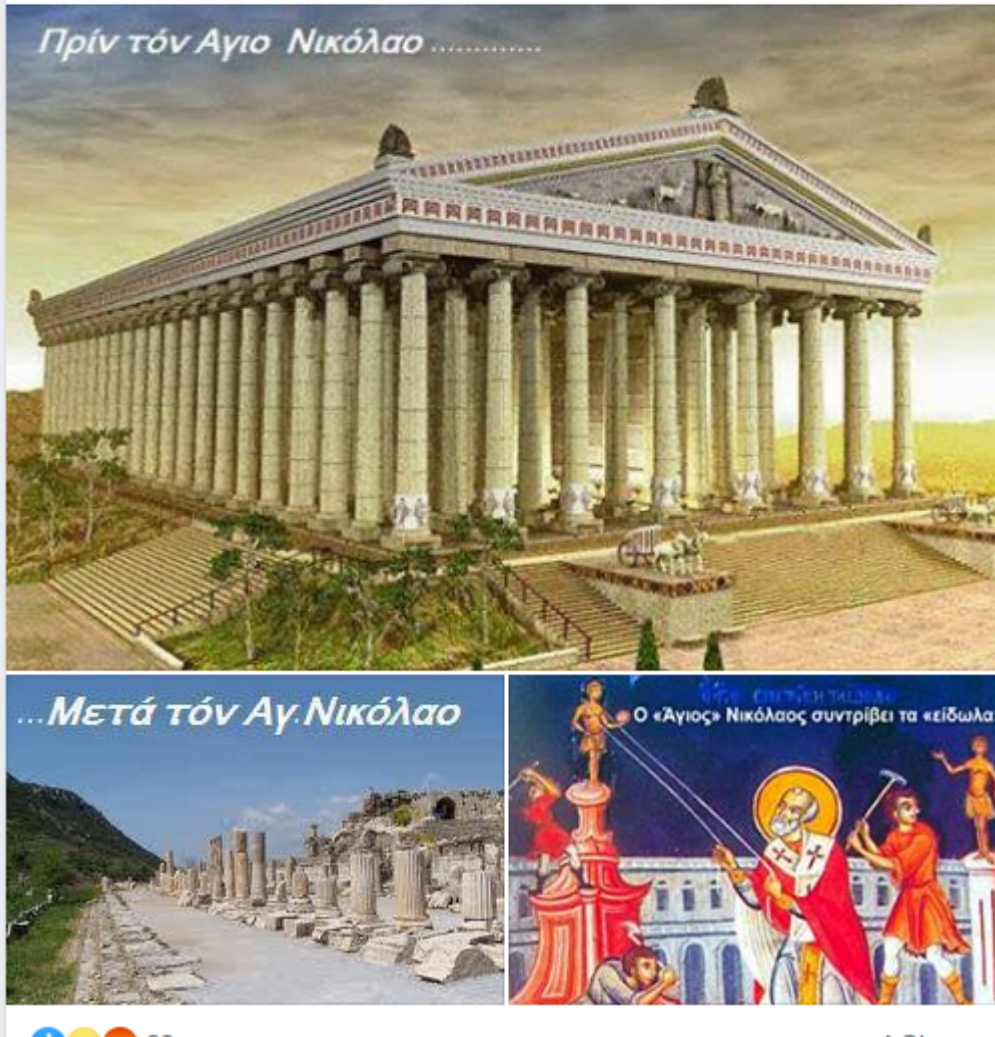
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### **Post by "Cassius" of December 9, 2019 at 10:03 AM**

I clipped this from a screen at FB, on the same point (that Epicurean culture cannot flourish in all nations):

and the trees like the leaves of the tree from the great tree  
In the icon there are several images showing agios nikolaos tearing down temples and idols. The most interesting is the image from the benaki museum that has highlights of the life of the well-known saint Nicholas, and here in zoom the controversial event.....  
It was so much their self-awareness and worship that they believed that in the statues and temples inhabit demons and that's why they destroyed anything that was destroying Greek culture and especially the Greek religion!! Post Μύρτις Kydōniátου

⚙ Rate this translation



Post by “Elli” of December 9, 2019 at 10:52 AM

"Ionic", by C.P Cavafy

That we've broken their statues,  
that we've driven them out of their temples,  
doesn't mean at all that the gods are dead.  
O land of Ionia, they're still in love with you,  
their souls still keep your memory.

Cavafy will write in his poem Ionic. A statement of the eternally Greek Cavafy who invariably perceived christians as the plague of Greece. Christians should not hasten to count Cavafy as one of their own. For they will be deluded. Everybody and his dog will laugh at them. Cavafy is a stranger to christianity, as strange as a midnight sun. In 1929, four years before he died, he will declare his final verdict in the poem Myris:

I felt that he, a Christian, was united with his own people  
and that I was becoming a stranger, a total stranger... and had always been a stranger.

Three times he underlines that word. Even marking it with that irrevocable always. Three cries [Τρὶς ἄχχεν]. Thrice did Achilles raise his mighty cry over the trench, and thrice did the Trojans and their horses shudder and turn back. When Cavafy underlines something there is a good reason. In his entire body of work he has only underlined a total of eight words. Now, on the other hand, there are many passages in his work where he declares his christianity in a genuine and telling manner. I love the church, he says. And he speaks of the glory of Byzantium. About chalices and grails, incense burners and chants, the cross, the invocations, the litanies and the candelabras. His verses are awash with mitres, priestly tiaras and the robes of monks.

Deviousness, dear reader. Deviousness and pretence. All such references are like the ink of a squid, to muddle the water. Like Themistocles and his servant, so that the Medes would think he had joined them. In order to gain a "free pass" he had to pretend to be one of them. Yet he is always on the side of the Lacedaemonians, as he makes it known at their Thermopylae.

The issue of what kind of relationship Cavafy maintained with christianity can only be understood only when considered from its very beginnings. Cavafy differentiates himself at the root from all other Greek poets who profess the Greek orthodox spirit. Solomos, for example, Kalvos, Palamas, Seferis, Elytis, and other notable individuals. Even in the asymmetrical and inadequate case of Kazantzakis. Because the writings of Kazantzakis, with Jesus and christianity as a reference point, when compared to the work of Cavafy, are nothing but the scribblings of a toddler. Literally.

Liantinis Dimitris from his book "Gemma"

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## Post by "Elli" of December 9, 2019 at 10:58 AM

Cassius wrote : <<I suspect this is another area where DeWitt slips due to his affection for Christianity.>>

Deviousness, dear reader. Deviousness and pretense. All such references are like the ink of a squid, to muddle the water. Like Themistocles and his servant, so that the Medes would think he had joined them. In order to gain a "free pass" he had to pretend to be one of them. Yet he (Dewitt) is always on the side of the Epicureans, as he makes it known at his book "Epicurus and his philosophy". 😊

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## Post by "Elli" of December 9, 2019 at 12:08 PM

I have some news. I read carefully the following ES 80 and I've noticed a particular greek word.

LXXX.(80) Νέω σωτηρίας μοῖρα τῆς ἡλικίας τήρησις καὶ φυλακὴ τῶν πάντα μολυνόντων κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τὰς οἰστρώδεις.

80. The first measure of security is to watch over one's youth and to guard against what makes havoc of all by means of maddening desires.

Here Epicurus for describing such desires he uses a greek word that is "οἰστρος-οιστρώδεις" [pron. oestros-oestrodes]. What meant in ancient greek this word? Mainly it has the meaning of the "horsefly" (\*).

Who gave the characterization to himself as a "horsefly" in his "Apology" ? Well, Socrates did.



Anyone who has suffered from this insect, the horsefly, knows that there is nothing more annoying. Socrates was ironical, divisive and annoying, he declares that in his "apology" through Plato.

In the opposite, Epicurus with this ES 80 declares that we must be apart from such "horseflies", and he meant idealistic ideas by Socrates and the like. It is wrong that I read somewhere that Epicurus with this expression "oestrodes epithimies" i.e. maddening desires, he did mean the

sexual desires. No, he meant that we have to go apart from mad people that produce madness. Yes, Epicurus, you are a great philosopher indeed, you used the right words since your philosophy is so clear and against the madness and illness of people!

From his letter to Pythocles : "But to assign a single cause for these occurrences, when phenomena demand several explanations, is **madness**, and is quite wrongly practiced by persons who are partisans of the foolish notions of astrology, by which they give futile explanations of the causes of certain occurrences, and all the time do not by any means free the divine nature from the burden of responsibilities". 👍

<https://bugguide.net/node/view/13234>

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 9, 2019 at 12:30 PM**

So Elli how would you translate 80? How would you revise this English translation?

[Quote from elli](#)

80. The first measure of security is to watch over one’s youth and to guard against what makes havoc of all by means of maddening desires.

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### **Post by “Elli” of December 9, 2019 at 3:16 PM**

80. The first measure of security is to watch over one’s youth and to guard against what makes havoc of all by means of impetuous desires for idealistic ideas. 😡

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### **Post by “Hiram” of December 9, 2019 at 3:53 PM**

[Quote from Nate](#)

I'm looking for clarification on the following quotation by De Witt:

"...**Epicureanism was primarily a cult of the founder...**"

To many followers, Epicurus was a salvific figure, a cultural hero of humanism and science. Plotina (stepmother of Emperor Hadrian, circa 120 of Common Era) called Epicurus her Savior, Lucian praised him as holy (in *Alexander the Oracle Monger*, also by the second century), and Lucretius refers to Epicurus also in soteriological / salvific language saying that he alone among men pierced the nature of things and elevating him to cosmological significance because of that. This was late, but even in the early Garden, Colotes revered Epicurus.

One of the reviews of Catherine Wilson's books, or one of her articles (the Aeon one?) shows a depiction of Epicurus looking like a Savior figure and with the serpent of superstition / religion under his feet, which is reminiscent of how the Virgin is represented in Catholic imagery, but of course this derives from Lucretius' praise in DRN, and how he casts away the darkness of the mind. So this is how Epicureans referred to him. This imagery is positively religious-looking.

And, of course, in "the Sculpted Word" there is a full study of the Epicurean sculptural tradition and how Epicureans used art in their missionary work. These sculptures invariably appealed to religious feelings by consciously and purposefully imitating Greek religious standards.

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## Post by "Eikadistes" of December 20, 2019 at 2:48 PM

### On "-isms" and Pleasure Wisdom

#### "**Epicureanism**" vs. "**Epicurean Philosophy**"

The *Society of Friends of Epicurus* has dedicated extensive dialogue to the suffix "**-ism**". In the Epicurean spirit of **παρρησία** (or "**parrhēsía**") meaning "**frank speech**" or "**speaking candidly**", **it is important to recognize that** the ancient Greek language does not employ the "**-ism**" when referring to the philosophy of Epicurus; thus, while the word **can** be functionally employed for practical purposes, "**Epicureanism**" may **NOT be appropriate word to invoke when referring to the philosophy of Epicurus. "Epicureanism" does not quite capture the nuance of Epicurean Philosophy.**

#### **-ISMS**

The English suffix, *"-ism"* — according to BOTH common and academic usages — is employed to designate a distinctive "doctrine", "theory", "attitude", "belief", "practice", "process", "state", "condition", "religion", "system", or "philosophy". According to this definition, it is NOT incorrect to add a simple *"-ism"* at the end of *"the philosophy of Epicurus"*, as it should, *appropriately and accurately*, render the word "Epicureanism" (or even "Epicurism").

In more succinct terms, we can visualize "Epicurean-ism" simply as "Epicurean-philosophy".

While this works for practical purposes, it *may* lead to several misconceptions:

[1] Bracketing the suffix *"-ism"* to a name often indicates devotional worship of a historical figure (*consider the differences between the old, misleading usage of "Mohammedanism" versus the preferred, contemporary usage of "Islam"*). Epicureans do NOT worship Epicurus as a supernatural prophet, NOR as a manifestation of a transcendental ideal.

[2] In the modern era, *"-ism"* is frequently used to identify political typologies. Terms like *"Monarchism"*, *"Liberalism"*, *"Conservatism"*, *"Communism"* and *"Fascism"* express ideological systems that — *contrary to Epicurean philosophy* — presuppose the existence of an ideal state or *utopia*, organized according to the dimensions of a perfect, timeless principle.

[3] The suffix *"-ισμός"* (or *"-ismós"*) was rarely employed in ancient Greek; few examples of *"-ism"* (or *"-ismós"*) exist prior to the linguistic conventions of the modern period. In giving preference to the term *"Epicurean philosophy"*, we acknowledge the importance of privileging ancient Greek historical sources as opposed to relying upon Latin translations.

#### **-ISMVS**

Our tradition of adding *"-ism"* to the end of words — in which we express distinctive *"ideologies"* — begins in the post-Classical period, corresponding to the *Renaissance*. Coming from the Latin *"re-"* (meaning *"again"*) and *"nasci"* (meaning *"to be born"*), the Renaissance, or cultural *"rebirth"* resurrected the innovations of Antiquity. This revival adapted translations through the Latin language, using the Roman alphabet, *sheathing ancient Greek observations*. Liberally, scholars began to apply the suffix *"-ismus"* — as we would recognize it today — during this period of *New Latin*.

*(I'm going to call the tradition — in which modern English-speakers partake — the "ism-ism", or, in other words, "the systemic practice of adding '-ism' to idea-expressing words". Due to the profound influence of Latin, and the linguistic conventions of the modern era, we ALL — in one way or another — have become*

*dedicated Ismists.)*

From the perspective of the contemporary world, the suffix -ISMVS or "-ismus" was first borrowed from the *Old Latin* language of the Romans, and later appropriated by post-Classical peoples as *New Latin* and *Contemporary Latin*. We find an abundance of "-ism" and "-ismus" in both *Romance* and *Germanic* language families. As in *Latin*, the "-ism" indicates distinctive "doctrines", "theories", "attitudes", "beliefs", "religions", "systems", and "philosophies".

Here, *however*, is where we note a difference that our Mediterranean friends have often observed: while the Greek language — like Celtic, Indic, and other Indo-European languages — has evolved from a common root, it did NOT adopt Latin conventions the same way that *Romance* and *Germanic* languages have. *Ancient Greek* philosophers, especially Epicurus, would not have thought of "*philosophies*" as "*-isms*".

-ize | -ίζω | -ίζō |

We receive the Latin -ISMVS or "-ismus" from the ancient Greek "-ισμός" ("-ismós"), which, *itself*, is a bracketing of two *other* ancient Greek words, those words being "-ίζω" ("-ízō") and "-μός" ("-mós"). *We'll start with the former word*. The suffix "-ίζω" ("-ízō") was added to *nouns* to form *new verbs*. Let's look at (x3) examples:

[1] *canonize* | κανονίζω | kanonízō

κανών or "*kanón*" literally referred to a "reed", and carried the connotation of a "measuring rod" or "standard"

+ "-ίζω" ("-ízō" or "-ize") rendered "κανονίζω", "kanonízō" or "*canonize*" meaning "to make *standard*".

[2] *Hellenize* | ἑλληνίζω | Hellēnízō

Ἕλληγ or "*Héllēn*" literally referred to that which is "Greek".

+ "-ίζω" ("-ízō" or "-ize") rendered "ἑλληνίζω", "Hellēnízō", or "*Hellenize*" meaning "to make *Greek*".

[3] *synchronize* | συγχρονίζω | súnkhronosízō

σύγχρονος or "*súnkhronos*" literally referred to "synchronous"

+ "-ίζω" ("-ízō" or "-ize") rendered "συγχρονίζω", "súnkhronosízō", or "*synchronize*" meaning "to *sync*".

The key point with “-ίζω” (“-ízō”) — and our Modern English suffix “-ize” — is that we can turn any *concept* into a *verb*, or, in more philosophically interesting terms, we can **ACTIVATE** it.

-μός | -μός

The second suffix from which the *ancient Greek* “-ισμός” (“-ismós”) was bracketed is “-μός” (“-mós”). Contrary to the convention of **ACTIVATING** a word that *represents a concept*, adding “-μός” (“-mós”) **ABSTRACTS** an *action*. We can demonstrate this convention through (x3) other examples that translate well into Modern English:

[1] cataclysm | κατακλυσμός | kataklusmós

κατακλύζω (*kataklúzō*) - literally meant “to wash away”.

+ “-μός” (“-mós”) rendered “κατακλυσμός”, “kataklusmós” or “*cataclysm*”, meaning a “great flood”.

[2] sarcasm | σαρκασμός | sarkasmós

“σαρκάζω” or “*sarkázō*” literally, and figuratively meant “tearing apart” or “to tear off the flesh”.

+ “-μός” (“-mós”) rendered “σαρκασμός”, “sarkasmós” or “sarcasm”, meaning “(figuratively) tearing apart”.

[3] syllogism | συλλογισμός | sullogismós

συλλογίζομαι (*sullogízomai*) literally meant “to compute” or “to infer”.

+ “-μός” (“-mós”) rendered “συλλογισμός”, “sarkasmós”, or “*syllogism*”, meaning an “inference”.

The key point with “-μός” (“-mós”) is that the ancient Greeks could turn any *verb* into a word that expressed an *abstract concept*, or, in more philosophically interesting terms, it could *systematize activity into an idea*.

-ism | -ισμός | -ismós

The re-bracketing of the suffix “-μός” (“-mós”) appended with “-ίζω” (“-ízō”) presents us with “-ισμός” (“-ismós”) or the suffix “-ism”, a convention which *systematizes a verb that has been activated from a noun*. Very few examples exist in ancient Greek. A suitable example for English mono-linguists can be demonstrated in the word “*Sabbath*”:

[1] σάββατον | *sábbaton* literally means “the *Sabbath*” (borrowed from the Hebrew שבת or “*shabát*”)

+ "-ίζω" ("-ízō or "-ize") σαββατίζω | sabbatízō means “to make, observe, or keep the Sabbath”

+ "-ισμός" ("-ismós") σαββατισμός | sabbatismós means “the state of making or keeping the Sabbath”

Unlike the ubiquitous "-ismus" of *Latin*, and the overused "-ism" of *Modern English*, the *ancient Greek* "-ismos" is almost NEVER used. The ancient Greeks did NOT share our zeal for *Ismism*. When faced with the need to express a NEW word with FRESH meaning, the ancient Greeks built words from *either* [1] the names of people and objects they directly knew or observed, and [2] active forces they felt or experienced, but NOT as [3] abstract systems.

*So, why NOT "Epicureanism"?*

The Epicurean path to wisdom recognizes that we EXPERIENCE NATURE DIRECTLY and NOT indirectly as *abstract systems*. *Epicurean philosophy* and the phenomena it observes — the sensation of an atomic reality, the feelings of pleasure and pain, and the anticipation of natural patterns — neither depends upon allegiance to a single leader, nor initiation into a secret society, nor longing for a golden age, nor adhering to institutional precepts, nor devotion to a holy ideal.

*Christ's resurrection* would not be known to the contemporary era without *the Gospels*.

*Muhammad's revelation* would not be known to the contemporary era without *the Qur'an*.

*Even* without the historical personage of Epicurus, humanity would still have sensed an atomic reality, felt pleasure and pain, and anticipated the patterns of nature. Humanity would *still* have documented the social changes throughout history, would still have seen the rise and fall of Empires and their ideologies. Humans would still have made choices with the intention of benefitting their lives in avoiding sickness and pursuing pleasure.

Without *Jesus of Nazareth*, Christians would not recite the *Lord's Prayer*.

Without *Muhammad*, Muslims would perform *Salah* to Mecca five times a day.

Without Epicurus, *however*, humanity would still have pursued pleasure. NATURE, *itself*, is so much LARGER, *more important*, and more fundamental than any one historical personage, *including Epicurus*. Vocabulary aside, the wise person would still have engaged the natural world, and pursued pleasure to its fullest.

**"Epicureanism" (or, also, "Epicurism") carries a connotation - albeit very slightly - that our path to wisdom is just another doctrinal institution that advertises immaterial truths from an untouchable dimension. It is not quite as accurate to categorize seekers of pleasure wisdom as "Epicureanists" who follow "Epicureanism" as it is to identify as "Epicureans" who study "Epicurean philosophy". Our endeavor rests within our own bodies; NATURE, itself, is the greatest teacher.**

**All that being said ...**

**... for practical purposes, there most certainly isn't anything inherently wrong about employing the term "Epicureanism". The "Epicurean-" part is unchanged, and the "-ism", literally, and harmlessly, identifies a "philosophy". In Modern English, this does correctly indicate our love of natural wisdom, apart from any oath to a mythic principle.**

**Nonetheless, the employment of "Epicurean philosophy" over "Epicureanism" serves to keep our anticipations FRESH, to indicate to others that our interactions are bigger than disembodied souls paddling ideas back and forth in a court of Mind, and to act as a reminder that the path to wisdom is not a map that has been given to us from an eternal place of perfection, but that we each carry a well-calibrated compass within ourselves to know the world and guide us to happiness.**

**"DON'T call [my belief system] an -ism!"**

**While "Epicurean philosophy" may better reflect its own etymological origin (without the "-ism"), it should NOT indicate that the suffix "-ism" should be reserved as a derogation for non-Epicurean ideas, nor exclusively employed as a polemic toward idealism. Even Epicurean philosophy, itself, incorporates atomism, hedonism, naturalism, and materialism; most certainly, these "-isms" are NOT idealistic.**

**While Epicurean philosophy boasts a unique foundation upon materialism (and lambasts its opponents for idealism), it should also be noted that other ancient Greek schools — ALSO — did NOT employ the "-ism". Members of Plato's Academy were "Academics"; members of Aristotle's Lyceum with "Peripatetics"; members of Zeno's Stoa were "Stoics". It was only later that scholars began to employ the terms "Platonism", "Aristotelianism", and "Stoicism".**

**Furthermore, this same acknowledgment applies to religious traditions:**

**The earliest rendering of the religion we refer to as Judaism was תּוֹדָה or "Yahadút", from the Hebrew word יְהוּדָה "y'hudá" meaning "the Jewish people" and the suffix תּוֹ ("ót ) meaning "the tradition of". The ismed word that we employ — Judaism — is first found in Maccabees 2 in the Koine Greek language by Hellenistic Jews, written**



**collection of beliefs and practices that developed from the teachings of Master Kong (anglicized as “Confucius”), the word 儒 “Rú” roughly translates as “man receiving instruction from Heaven” or “scholar” and identifies a student of this collective body of works.**

**Like early Christians, the ancient Chinese Taoists identified their universal principle as 道 “Dào”, meaning “road”, “path” or “Way”. In China, the religious tradition is written 道教 “Dàojiào” pronounced /'daʊ.tʃəʊ/ (or, for English mono-linguists, roughly transliterated as “dow-chyow”). This tradition was anglicized as “Taoism”.**

**“Shintoism”, the anglicized name for the native religious ideology of Japan provides an interesting example of an ismized tradition. “Shinto” is of Chinese origin, constructed from the Kanji logogram for the words 神 “Shén” (meaning “God”) and 道 “Dào”, (meaning “Way”) rendering 神道 “Shéndào”. However, native Japanese populations do not employ this as often as they do 神代傳 “kan'nagara no michi”, loosely translated as “way of the divine transmitted from time immemorial”). “Shintoism” therefore, is an anglicization of Eastern logograms, inherited from ancient China, used to express a Japanese philosophy.**

**Christianity is the dominant tradition of the English-speaking world; thus, it has avoided being popularly -ismized, since those who accused other traditions of being mere “-isms” (Renaissance scholars and speakers of Latin) were overwhelmingly Christian, themselves. The rare occasion the word “Christianism” is employed (like “Islamism”), it is typically employed as a derogation by ideological opponents of the tradition suggestion radical and dangerous ideology.**

**Nonetheless, even early Christians did NOT refer to their wisdom tradition using the same vocabulary as do modern Christians. They used the term της οδου or “tês hodoû”, meaning “The Way”. A non-Christian, Greek community in Antioch that first coined the term Χριστιανός or “christianós”. Within 70 years, the early Church Father Ignatius of Antioch employed the term of Χριστιανισμός or “Christianismós” to refer to the tradition.**

### **Pleasure Wisdom**

**Whether we employ the term “Epicureanism”, or the sometimes-preferred “Epicurean philosophy”, the distinguishing feature of Epicurus' wisdom is his insistence that pleasure is the supreme goal of life, that this is a tangible happiness, free from physical pain and emotional anguish, grounded in a knowable reality, formed from particles, sensible to living beings, who feel their way to pleasure, and anticipate the consequences of their choices. No cosmic principle precedes, or supersedes the universe, nor was the universe divined for any purpose greater than the satisfaction of the subjects who enjoy it. The wisdom of pleasure was NOT invented by any one prophet, nor divinely revealed to illuminate humanity; simply,**

***Epicurus was one of many insightful friends who observed this reality, and shared in the wisdom of pleasure.***

***Cheers, friends!***

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### **Post by “Martin” of December 21, 2019 at 1:47 AM**

**"Without *Muhammad*, Muslims would perform *Salah* to Mecca five times a day."**

should be

**Without *Muhammad*, Muslims would not perform *Salah* to Mecca five times a day."**

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 21, 2019 at 6:53 AM**

Nate a lot of hard work went into that - thanks!

Has that been reviewed by Hiram or others as representative of a collective view of the Society of Epicurus? I note the opening reference to that and it seems to be written as such, but I wasn't clear. The last paragraph in general, and the final sentence in particular, sounds like it was intended as such, and wasn't part of your earlier comments on this subject if I recall correctly. And in that context I am interested in the thought process behind the last sentence, because I don't really agree with that formulation myself. I would probably not comment about except for the inference that this might be intended to be a statement of the Society of Epicurus (if that was intended) in which case I think the conclusion is something to discuss further.

I would particularly question "***the distinguishing feature of Epicurus' wisdom is his insistence that pleasure is the supreme goal of life***" and "

***The wisdom of pleasure was NOT invented by any one prophet, nor divinely revealed to illuminate humanity; simply, Epicurus was one of many insightful friends who observed this reality, and shared in the wisdom of pleasure."***

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### **Post by "Elayne" of December 21, 2019 at 8:41 AM**

I had the same concerns. Specifically, Epicurus didn't just have the goal of pleasure-- he laid out a detailed and thorough philosophy supporting pleasure as the goal. The way he linked his physics and the Canon to his ethics was profoundly novel. If he was just one of many who did that, the others didn't publish, so that's a surprising thing to say.

It's true that he came to his conclusions by observations-- he didn't invent reality but discovered how things work. However, that's not a reason to downplay his contribution. We don't say "well Einstein was just one of many, nothing special, because it's not like he invented relativity."

Anyone who closely and intelligently observed nature could have come to Epicurus' conclusions. Or Einstein's. But they didn't.

I came to much of his philosophy independently, but I lacked the sturdy framework to defend my position. Including to myself, to stay determined about living pleurably, when I am surrounded by those who disagree.

Epicurus not only described reality-- he had the courage to teach about it in the presence of strong opposition. So I am grateful to him and enjoy feeling intense admiration.

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### **Post by "Eikadistes" of December 21, 2019 at 10:49 AM**

Noted observation, Elayne! I appreciate that. I think I will re-work the conclusion a bit.

Cassius, Hiram actually created me a login with the *Society* page to publish the piece after he read it, so I'm just posting this for peer review.

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## Post by "Cassius" of December 21, 2019 at 12:05 PM

### [Quote from Nate](#)

Cassius, Hiram actually created me a login with the Society page to publish the piece after he read it, so I'm just posting this for peer review.

Yes, that makes a lot of difference. I've always been sensitive about when I or someone else is speaking for themselves vs when they are speaking for some kind of group entity. Everyone has their own opinions and deserves total latitude (as far as I am concerned) in holding them. The issues arise when we speak or write and imply that what we are saying amounts to speaking for someone else, or for a group, for obvious reasons. It's a difficult balancing act. The part in the last sentence about Epicurus being one of many is consistent with the manner in which Hiram often writes, and is a style that makes sense when trying to appeal to wider audiences, and it's not something that I am generally comfortable with myself -- but it all depends on the context and all the surrounding circumstances. As a personal opinion stated by you or anyone else it can come across as a totally benign remark, but if affixed to a "group" statement made by a group devoted to Epicurean philosophy then it could come across with a much different implication.

Issues like this are an inevitable part of trying to "grow" something so I don't see them as bad - it's just necessary to work through them.

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## Post by "Hiram" of December 21, 2019 at 2:02 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Has that been reviewed by Hiram or others as representative of a collective view of the Society of Epicurus? I note the opening reference to that and it seems to be written as such, but I wasn't clear. The last paragraph in general, and the final sentence in particular, sounds like it was intended as such, and wasn't part of your earlier comments on this subject if I recall correctly. And in that context I am interested in the thought process behind the last sentence, because I don't really agree with that formulation myself. I would probably not comment about except for the inference that this might be intended to be a statement of the Society of Epicurus (if that was intended) in which case I think the conclusion is something to discuss further.

I would particularly question "***the distinguishing feature of Epicurus' wisdom is his insistence that pleasure is the supreme goal of life***" and "

***The wisdom of pleasure was NOT invented by any one prophet, nor divinely revealed to illuminate humanity; simply, Epicurus was one of many insightful friends who observed this reality, and shared in the wisdom of pleasure.***"

I reviewed the essay and when he posts it, i was going to link my own essay on isms so that people see some of the discussions that we have had on this

<http://societyofepicurus.com/on-isms/>

The entire essay was authored by Nathan and even reflects his own creativity with different kinds of fonts etc so I want to respect his voice, and I also think this is a well articulated essay.

As for statements of the Society of Epicurus, I would not be comfortable with requiring everyone to share each and every opinion in unison. We now share the Tenets. We can build from there.

Concerning Nathan's closing statement I approve of it and would prefer if he does not change it. I would like @Nathan to continue developing as an Epicurean intellectual with his own ideas. Our final authority is nature and the canon, so for instance we know that Epicurus was wrong about the size of the sun because of the canon. For a similar reason I can see and appreciate Ilkka's third / atheistic interpretation of the gods, which he and I argue is in line with the canon.

Finally it was Aristippus who invented pleasure ethics, and it was Anniceris the Cyrenaic who invented hedonic calculus. So while Epicurus perfected pleasure ethics to where we know it today, with the help of his friends, and we are right to almost revere him, I am also ok w Nathan's statement that we do not see him as a kind of prophet. Many after and before him, like Diogenes of Oenoanda and Michel Onfray, and the Lokáyata school in india, and Yang Chu of china, have made contributions of their own to pleasure ethics.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of December 21, 2019 at 2:50 PM**

I actually was not suggesting that Nate should change anything, more inquiring as to the background and purpose of writing it the way he did. As I have been commenting in nearby posts I see these discussions as necessary "growing pains" as we work to produce something that's more lasting than just a facebook post that flies by and is quickly forgotten. It's very easy to fall into patterns that might be something that we change our minds about later.

Another example is that I am not at all sure that I agree that it helps anything to label Epicurus as "pleasure ethics" and lump him with others who discuss pleasure from different perspectives, just as I have never cared for the term "hedonism." I think pleasure is an issue that is quite a ways downstream from the more basic holdings about the nature of the universe, and other than Democritus and other atomists (with whom Epicurus may not have been particularly close in ethics) it would be necessary to dissect what their opinions are that led them to discuss pleasure before we could really be safe in knowing that they are consistent with the thrust of Epicurean philosophy.

All these are issues that everyone has to address for themselves and make up their own minds, and expressing individual opinions is only natural. But the process of coming up with "group" positions is very different and there are a lot of other factors involved. No doubt a lot of this will become clear too as you make public the core tenets you are mentioning.

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### **Post by "Elayne" of December 22, 2019 at 9:20 AM**

Hiram, I did not say no one had contributed to philosophy about pleasure-- neither is it true that no physicist contributed to the ability of Einstein to have his insight. But it is still true that no one but Epicurus put the pieces of Physics, Canon and Ethics together so clearly, and no one worked as hard and tirelessly as he did to teach it. He was not a "prophet"-- he was a scientist and a philosopher. And IMO he clearly deserves a first rank place among the philosophers, or I would not call myself an Epicurean but something else.

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### **Post by "Hiram" of December 22, 2019 at 12:01 PM**

#### [Quote from Elayne](#)

Hiram, I did not say no one had contributed to philosophy about pleasure-- neither is it true that no physicist contributed to the ability of Einstein to have his insight. But it is still true that no one but Epicurus put the pieces of Physics, Canon and Ethics together so clearly, and no one worked as hard and tirelessly as he did to teach it. He was not a "prophet"-- he was a scientist and a philosopher. And IMO he clearly deserves a first rank place among the philosophers, or I would not call myself an Epicurean but something else.

I agree with this. So maybe the only difference is that I'm not scared to engage the variety of philosophical voices (like Philodemus did, as we see in his scrolls which were ongoing conversations between Epicureans and with other schools).

Also, not sure if you're familiar with this source but there's a way in which Epicurean philosophy is supposed to be a living, evolving philosophical tradition in addition to the study of the original ideas (this allows for scientific and empirical input, even cultural insights, to add to the tradition). Epicurus himself gave, in addition to the canon and how to use it, specific [instructions on innovation](#) which include two criteria:

#### Quote

The relevant portion on doctrinal innovation has to do with the two criteria established by Epicurus himself **to prevent muddling of doctrines that disagree with each other**. These are consistency and coherence.

In the necessary and inevitable process of updating Epicurean teaching and tradition, I have subjected the potential innovations to the criteria given by Epicurus (**Erlor, 2011**) dealing with innovation and forbidding the 'muddling' of doctrines that disagree with each other. The two guidelines provided by Epicurus are **akoloythia** and **symphonia**, which translate as **consistency (has no internal contradictions)** and **coherence (is in symphony with the rest of Epicurus' doctrine)**.

Here was my initial post on this, the source is in Erlor

<http://societyofepicurus.com/epicurus-instr...-on-innovation/>

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### Post by "Elayne" of December 22, 2019 at 7:08 PM

Well, no, it would not be a difference between us to say that I am "scared" to engage other philosophic voices. I am surprised to hear you say that, when you know I have been outspoken when I disagree! Lol!

And I agree entirely with his advice on consistency and coherence. New information such as more accurate physics and astronomy do not change the underlying structure of his philosophy-- the consistency and coherence remains intact. Applying the ethics to new situations that didn't exist in his time, due to new technology, and using research about what activities tend to cause pleasure for most typical humans-- those are other examples of innovation.

But there are also a lot of things that are inconsistent and incoherent, and I am strongly

opposed to those things being tacked onto the philosophy.