

Thomas Cooper MD

Post by "Godfrey" of April 4, 2021 at 6:53 PM

[Admin Note: I am going to hijack Godfrey's post (which was originally [here](#)) and start a new thread from it on the topic of Thomas Cooper MD, materialist and friend of Thomas Jefferson]:

I would very much like to move Thomas Cooper into the "avowed Epicurean" category, but unfortunately I have not been able to find any references to Epicurus or Lucretius in Cooper's surviving writing which would allow me to do that. Hopefully at some point in the future someone can help me marshal the evidence that would justify the reclassification. To my knowledge at the moment here are some of the most important links on Cooper:

<http://ThomasCooperMD.com>

[Wikipedia Entry](#)

[Bio of Thomas Cooper at Dickinson College](#), where he taught from 1811-1815 before he apparently resigned under pressure due to religious controversies. It appears that Cooper's memory is now being downplayed at Dickinson due to Cooper's later positions on slavery. The material formerly online at [Encyclopedia Dicksonia](#) (this links to the Archive.org version) no longer seems to appear at the Dickinson college website.

PDF of Cooper's [The Scripture Doctrine of Materialism](#)

[Appendix on the Clergy](#)

What follows is Godfrey's post:

Cassius thanks for the link to Cooper. This is all new to me and quite surprising. Except for the link to Plato 😊

Post by "Cassius" of April 4, 2021 at 7:04 PM

I found the material on Thomas Cooper maybe 8 or 9 years ago and like you said found it FASCINATING. Cooper was a brilliant man and far ahead of his time; perhaps actually the most intellectually "like us" of the founding fathers - more aggressive than even Thomas Paine on religion. The only disappointment I have to admit is that I looked far and wide without finding any references in his work to Epicurus or Lucretius. Maybe he thought he was pushing the envelope already without associating himself with the dreaded name of "pleasure" - I say that because he had to publish many of his best works anonymously so that he wouldn't be fired from his job at the new University of South Carolina. They did eventually fire him for his religious views anyway, but today's main USC library is named after him. I strongly doubt most people in South Carolina understand who Cooper was and the ideas he promoted.

I actually thought I had a subforum devoted to him, pointed mainly to that thomascoopermd.com page. I probably will set one up at some point, since his work is so relevant, and maybe sometime in the future someone can document the Lucretius/Epicurus connection I have missed so far.

Post by “Don” of April 4, 2021 at 7:15 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

more aggressive than even Thomas Paine on religion.

Wow! Okay, you've piqued my interest!!

Post by “Godfrey” of April 4, 2021 at 7:41 PM

A teaser quote from wikipedia:

Cooper was described by Thomas Jefferson as "one of the ablest men in America" and by John Adams as "a learned ingenious scientific and talented madcap.

Post by “Cassius” of April 4, 2021 at 9:15 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Cassius](#)

more aggressive than even Thomas Paine on religion.

Wow! Okay, you've piqued my interest!!

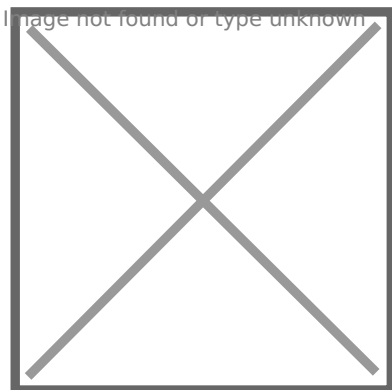
Part of the reason that I say "more aggressive" is that while "Age of Reason" was one of the most influential books on me in decades past, I've come to think that Paine was more of a Stoic than an Epicurean. Of course the focus on "Reason" is a giveaway, plus Paine seems sincerely to have been a deist - I read him as firmly advocating for the clockwork model in which a supernatural creator put the universe in motion and then stepped back.

Cooper seems to have been much more an out-and-out materialist of the Epicurean variety in his physics. However its been more than a few years since I did my original Cooper reading, so I stand to be corrected. I think it's reasonable to say you can scan [this introduction](#) and see that it is more radically materialist than anything Paine produced.

Ok Godfrey you have pushed me over the ledge - I will mark these posts and move them into a new thread of their own....

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of June 24, 2022 at 11:10 PM

I came to this thread some days ago and found out that the link above is broken, but I found this other one looking for info about Thomas Cooper and I loved his reasoning about the soul, for one; haven't been able to look into it more.



[A View of the Metaphysical and Physiological Arguments In Favor of Materialism](#)

A VIEW OF THE METAPHYSICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF MATERIALISM
FIRST PUBLISHED AT WARRINGTON, ENGLAND, IN 1781. — BY THOMAS COOPER, M.D....
thomascoopermd.wordpress.com

Post by “Cassius” of June 24, 2022 at 11:34 PM

Thanks for pointing out the broken link camotero - fixed now.

Cooper was a good writer and it's a shame he's unknown today.