

# Welcome Philia!

**Post by “Cassius” of August 6, 2021 at 2:04 AM**

Welcome [Kalosyni](#) !

This is the place for students of Epicurus to coordinate their studies and work together to promote the philosophy of Epicurus. Please remember that all posting here is subject to our [Community Standards / Rules of the Forum](#) our [Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean](#) and our [Posting Policy statements](#) and [associated posts](#).

Please understand that the leaders of this forum are well aware that many fans of Epicurus may have sincerely-held views of what Epicurus taught that are incompatible with the purposes and standards of this forum. This forum is dedicated exclusively to the study and support of people who are committed to classical Epicurean views. As a result, this forum is not for people who seek to mix and match some Epicurean views with positions that are inherently inconsistent with the core teachings of Epicurus.

All of us who are here have arrived at our respect for Epicurus after long journeys through other philosophies, and we do not demand of others what we were not able to do ourselves. Epicurean philosophy is very different from other viewpoints, and it takes time to understand how deep those differences really are. That's why we have membership levels here at the forum which allow for new participants to discuss and develop their own learning, but it's also why we have standards that will lead in some cases to arguments being limited, and even participants being removed, when the purposes of the community require it. Epicurean philosophy is not inherently democratic, or committed to unlimited free speech, or devoted to any other form of organization other than the pursuit by our community of happy living through the principles of Epicurean philosophy.

One way you can be most assured of your time here being productive is to tell us a little about yourself and personal your background in reading Epicurean texts. It would also be helpful if you could tell us how you found this forum, and any particular areas of interest that you have which would help us make sure that your questions and thoughts are addressed.

In that regard we have found over the years that there are a number of key texts and references which most all serious students of Epicurus will want to read and evaluate for themselves. Those include the following.

1. ["Epicurus and His Philosophy"](#) by Norman DeWitt
2. ["A Few Days In Athens"](#) by Frances Wright

3. [\*\*The Biography of Epicurus by Diogenes Laertius.\*\*](#) This includes the surviving letters of Epicurus, including those to [Herodotus](#), [Pythocles](#), and [Menoceus](#).
4. [\*\*"On The Nature of Things"\*\*](#) - by Lucretius (a poetic abridgement of Epicurus' "On Nature")
5. [\*\*"Epicurus on Pleasure"\*\*](#) - By Boris [Nikolsky](#)
6. The chapters on Epicurus in Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks On Pleasure."
7. [\*\*Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section\*\*](#)
8. [\*\*Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section\*\*](#)
9. The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda - [\*\*Martin Ferguson Smith translation\*\*](#)
10. [\*\*A Few Days In Athens" - Frances Wright\*\*](#)
11. Lucian Core Texts on Epicurus: (1) [\*\*Alexander the Oracle-Monger\*\*](#), (2) [\*\*Hermotimus\*\*](#)
12. [\*\*Philodemus "On Methods of Inference"\*\*](#) (De Lacy version, including his appendix on relationship of Epicurean canon to Aristotle and other Greeks)

It is by no means essential or required that you have read these texts before participating in the forum, but your understanding of Epicurus will be much enhanced the more of these you have read.

And time has also indicated to us that if you can find the time to read one book which will best explain [classical Epicurean philosophy](#), as opposed to most modern "eclectic" interpretations of Epicurus, that book is Norman DeWitt's ***Epicurus And His Philosophy***.

***Welcome to the forum!***

# Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean

1. Not "flourishing," "human potential," "self-actualization," or "meaningfulness," but happiness grounded in the feeling of pleasure.
2. Not "absence of pain" as a full statement of the goal of life, but "the Feelings are two, pleasure and pain" and "Pleasure is the beginning and the end of a happy life."
3. Not virtue for the sake of virtue, but virtue as instrumental for the attainment of pleasure.
4. Not "the greatest good for the greatest number," but "Every desire must be confronted with this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished and what if it is not?"
5. Not "humanism," "transhumanism," "individualism," "collectivism," "egoism," "altruism," "social progress," "Marxism," "democracy," "tyranny," or any "one size fits all" political ideal of any kind, but social structure based on friendship which "is formed and maintained by means of a community of life among those who have reached the fullness of pleasure."
6. Not "hard determinism," but "some things happen from necessity, some from chance, and others through our own choice."
7. Not "supernaturalism," but "materialism."
8. Not "supernatural gods," or "life after death," but confidence in a fully material universe and "for those men for whom wisdom is possible, and who do seek it, such men may truly live as gods."
9. Not only "short term hedonism," but "it is to continuous pleasures that I invite you."
10. Not "rationalism," but "all reason is dependent upon sensations."
11. Not fearful of death nor careless of losing life, but valuing life for the opportunity of pleasure it brings.

## Our Posting Policy At EpicureanFriends.com:

**"No Partisan Politics," "No Supernatural Religion," and "No Absolute Virtue"**

This forum is dedicated to promoting the philosophy of Epicurus, and not to any partisan political positions whether "left," "right," or "center." The task of rediscovering Epicurean philosophy requires that such discussions be held elsewhere. Posts violating this rule are subject to removal.



Epicurean philosophy firmly rejects the viewpoint that there are any supernatural forces or absolute virtues or Platonic ideals of any kind. Argument which is based on supernatural claims, or "absolute" virtues or ideals of any kind, are in violation of this rule and subject to removal.

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**Post by "Kalosyni" of August 6, 2021 at 5:22 PM**

Thank you Cassius, and thank you for creating this amazing resource and forum!

My studies of Epicurus have just begun this summer, so I am just beginning to build knowledge and understanding. So far I've been reading what I can on the internet, poking around and seeing what I can find, which is how I found this forum. I soon hope to order DeWitt's book, thinking an actual physical book would be nice.

You wrote: "All of us who are here have arrived at our respect for Epicurus after long journeys through other philosophies,...".

And that is true for me as well. I studied Buddhist philosophy (many schools of Buddhism and different teachers) and also attended a Zen Buddhist group for a number of years. But I was not happy, and struggled with feelings of emptiness and dark thoughts. It's not enough for the mind to "try" to end suffering. One needs to actively cultivate happiness, and now it feels to me that Epicurus philosophy has a way for me to do so.

Having found Epicurus ancient philosophy, I feel like it has already helped me. I feel more hopeful. It is truly a gift to incline the mind toward pleasure and the goodness of life! Especially appealing to me is the emphasis on friendship in Epicureanism.

Thank you again for this place to connect with others who are interested in this philosophy!

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### **Post by "Cassius" of August 6, 2021 at 6:08 PM**

Thank you for your post Philia! I know that there are many here who have followed a similar route through aspects of Buddhism. Buddhism is not something I know much about myself, so it is valuable for you and others here to have that knowledge so that we have resources with which to answer questions and comparisons that people often make.

To the extent that my superficial understanding is correct, it is my impression that Buddhism can indeed lead to a sort of nihilism, and although that kind of term was not current in Epicurus' day I do believe that a lot of what he directed his attention to combating was just such a feeling of despair and hopelessness that often strikes many people.

One of the most valuable things you can do for the forum (and for yourself) will be to post questions and comments and suggestions as you read into Epicurus. Don't wait til the end of your reading - there are no stupid questions and it helps everyone if you ask questions while reading, even if you think that just reading further will probably answer the question. It helps all of us to keep current in talking about the basics so that we don't get too far down into any rabbit holes.

Thanks again for posting and we look forward to hearing more from you.,

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## Post by “Don” of August 6, 2021 at 6:36 PM

### [Quote from Philia](#)

I studied Buddhist philosophy (many schools of Buddhism and different teachers) and also attended a Zen Buddhist group for a number of years.

Welcome, [Kalosyni](#)!

As [Cassius](#) mentioned, you'll find a number of us who came at Epicurus through study of Buddhism first. Mine also took a \*brief\* detour down the Stoic path before finally stopping by Epicurus's Garden for a look inside. 😊

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

One of the most valuable things you can do for the forum (and for yourself) will be to post questions and comments and suggestions as you read into Epicurus. Don't wait til the end of your reading - there are no stupid questions

I want to also echo [Cassius](#) 's sentiment here. It's valuable for everyone to work through answers, and something you thought "everyone knows" may very well spark a conversation about a topic more complex than you realized when you asked your question. That's happened to me here with pleasing, thought-provoking results 😊

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## Post by “Joshua” of August 6, 2021 at 8:43 PM

Welcome Philia! Took a detour through Buddhism myself, by way of the New England Transcendentalists (mostly Thoreau) and their obsession with Eastern quasi-profoundities.

When I could not reconcile the attitude of Western Zen or the claims of Secular Buddhism with the plain reading of the sutras, especially on the question of Rebirth, I began to realize I had tarried too long "East of Suez" (metaphorically speaking). I needed to find my way home. It was Lucretius who brought me back, and Stephen Greenblatt; but above all Lucretius.

But if you lag or shrink, even a little,  
Memmius, this I promise you for sure:  
My honeyed tongue from my rich heart will pour  
Such inexhaustible potions from its sources  
That slow old age, I fear, will penetrate  
Our limbs, loosen our life-bonds, and the deluge  
Of my argument in verse still flood your ears  
Over **one item only**.

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## Post by “Cassius” of August 6, 2021 at 8:54 PM

[Quote from JJElbert](#)

When I could not reconcile the attitude of Western Zen or the claims of Secular Buddhism with the plain reading of the sutras, especially on the question of Rebirth, I began

That's the kind of analysis I will never be able to offer in 1000 years. Thank you Joshua and others - this is a TEAM effort!

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## Post by “Godfrey” of August 6, 2021 at 9:57 PM

Welcome [Kalosyni](#) !

I'm yet another one who spent a few years dabbling in Zen, before discovering the Hellenistic philosophers and ultimately Epicurus. Just recently I've been reviewing the 4 Noble Truths (suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering and the path to the end of suffering): the Buddha and Epicurus seem to have had similar concerns in some ways (without getting into the "absence of pain" discussion). Epicurus was attempting to remove irrational fears, which are one form of suffering. His treatment of desire, to me, is more nuanced and useful than the Buddhist desire to get rid of desires. His grounding in the Canon and observable reality is also both comforting and inspiring.

As to [Joshua](#) 's mention of rebirth, I can't quite figure out how rebirth squares with the Buddhist doctrine of "no self." Epicurus describes an impermanent, material consciousness that ends with the death of the body and precludes an afterlife as well as rebirth; this seems more

consistent, believable and correct.

There's *absolutely* no evidence of Epicurus doing so, but as I reread books by today's Buddhist authors I almost get the sense that much of what Epicurus did was to correct the errors of Buddhist philosophy, just as he did with Plato. 🤔

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of August 7, 2021 at 12:47 AM**

#### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

the Buddhist desire to get rid of desires

For me it seemed that in the Buddhism there is an attitude of acquiescing and accepting things as they are, and yet we are alive and have human needs.

This is where I find Epicurus to be of great help in that he has categories of needs - natural and necessary; natural and unnecessary; and culturally conditioned and fruitless.

And from what I understand human connection and friendship is both a natural and necessary need, which back in Epicurus' time was probably much easier to have fulfilled compared to our current times.

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of August 7, 2021 at 2:04 AM**

This reminds of "the three jewels" of Buddhism: Buddha, dharma and sangha, which may or may not be similar to: Epicurus, the true philosophy and the Garden. The Garden would have been a center for friendship as well as learning and practice. The corresponding Buddhist sangha has thrived over the millennia and I imagine has been instrumental in keeping Buddhism thriving as well.

A case could be made that the disappearance of the gardens was even more contributory to the decline of Epicurean philosophy than the disappearance of the texts. In addition to their social functions, as centers of learning the gardens would have preserved the prior texts and added new ones.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of August 7, 2021 at 6:10 AM**

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

The Garden would have been a center for friendship as well as learning and practice

Which when you think about it is absolutely consistent with the thrust of the philosophy, since the conclusion is that pursuing wisdom solely for the sake of wisdom is worthless (or worse) since all is done for the sake of pleasure.

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## **Post by “Don” of August 7, 2021 at 7:00 AM**

[Quote from Philia](#)

culturally conditioned and fruitless

I don't know if I've seen that exact wording before, but I really like that! It's much more descriptive than the usual "empty." Thanks for this!!

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## **Post by “Kalosyni” of August 7, 2021 at 5:13 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

since all is done for the sake of pleasure.

And maybe to put it another way... for the sake of savoring and the enjoyment a life worth living?

I guess I still need to examine my personal hang-ups with the word "pleasure" that come from a protestant upbringing.

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## **Post by “Kalosyni” of August 7, 2021 at 5:31 PM**

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

. The Garden would have been a center for friendship as well as learning and practice.

I try to imagine what it would have been like!

And I also can see that it could be wonderful to re-create a modern Garden (or Gardens)...even a movement which would bring friendship and savoring life as the most important things, and work to overcome alienation, isolation, and consumerist over-consumption. And it would also be a place to examine and discuss the question of what makes a worthwhile enjoyable life.

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**Post by “Cassius” of August 7, 2021 at 5:43 PM**

[Quote from Philia](#)

I guess I still need to examine my personal hang-ups with the word "pleasure" that come from a protestant upbringing.

Yes that would appear to be the issue! 😊

The terminology "life worth living" is heavily weighted with its own Platonic / Aristotelian / Stoic / Religious baggage, since it implies that you have to look outside Nature's faculties (pleasure and pain) for justification and guidance. 😊

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**Post by “Don” of August 7, 2021 at 5:49 PM**

[Quote from Philia](#)

I guess I still need to examine my personal hang-ups with the word "pleasure" that come from a protestant upbringing.

Welcome to the club 😊 Cultural indoctrination is not easy to overcome. Which reminds me of one of my favorite fragments:

Quote

παιδείαν δὲ πᾶσαν, μακάριε, φεῦγε τὰκάτιον ἀράμενος. "Flee from all indoctrination, O blessed one, and hoist the sail of your own little boat."

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### Post by "Cassius" of August 7, 2021 at 5:53 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Welcome to the club 😊

LOL 😊

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### Post by "Cassius" of August 7, 2021 at 5:57 PM

More seriously, after laughing with Don -- I do find that (in my humble opinion) this is one of the hardest but most important issues to see through. We all have (and I think SHOULD have) our own personal views of what is the right way that we want ourselves and our friends to live.

But that's light-years away from taking the position that there is some justification (in the gods, or in idealism of some kind that is non-religious) that there is a set way for EVERYONE to live.

I think it's very possible and critical to understanding of Epicurean philosophy and the Epicurean view of the universe that both things can be true at the same time. If you don't hold fast to your own view of what is the "right" way for you to live, then you'll likely fall into nihilism or some other form of despair. But if you think that "your" view is the best for everyone, and that something gives you the right to enforce that view on everyone else, then you'll eventually fall into something that is (admit it or not) tyrannical in nature.

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### Post by "Don" of August 7, 2021 at 11:23 PM

Apologies to [Kalosyni](#) ...

At the risk of bogging down this Welcome thread (Feel free to branch this off, [Cassius](#)), I think [Cassius](#) and I have slightly different views on this topic. Not opposed, necessarily, but different emphases starting with different interpretations of [PD10](#).

I completely agree that Epicurus did not dictate or mandate THE Way to Live. No commandments, no mandatory sacrifices, no divinely-inspired edicts, etc.

However, on the other hand, I think that Epicurus would have had no hesitation in telling someone their choices were ill-conceived or detrimental to their leading a pleasurable, less painful, life (a la [PD10](#) and the Letter to Menoikeus). He would have said (and did say from my interpretation): *"You are more than welcome to choose to lead a life of indulgence, sex-drugs-and-rock-and-roll, etc.; however, though you may find pleasure in the moment in that, you are not going to lead a pleasurable life for long. That path is going to lead to more pain than pleasure."*

Voula Tsouna's [The Ethics of Philodemus](#) also has a discussion of Philodemus's "On Frank Speech" where Philodemus goes over some of the faults the teacher will admonish the student for, using frank speech, including "flattery, arrogance, irascibility, slander (13.2), envy, and malicious joy [especially joy at finding faults in others], a misplaced sense of dignity and shame, vanity, self-conceit, ...stubbornness and overconfidence, harshness and insolence, egocentrism, insecurity and ingratitude, laziness and procrastination..." Philodemus is basically saying these are not traits that an Epicurean should have. They seem, to me, a practical list of traits that will lead to pain, unhappiness, and a less-pleasurable life overall. If a student is exhibiting these traits in the Garden, the teacher will engage them in some frank speech to (a) make the student aware of their faults, and (b) get the student to apply corrective action.

To my understanding, this dovetails with PD5:

#### Quote

It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and well and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and well and justly without living pleasantly. Whenever any one of these is lacking, when, for instance, the person is not able to live wisely, though he lives well and justly, it is impossible for him to live a pleasant life.

So, there is not a Universal "Best Way to Live" but there are activities and traits that are going to - judging from observation over time of human beings generally - lead more than likely to eudaimonia and a pleasurable life with less pain.

When [Cassius](#) says:

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

that something gives you the right to enforce that view on everyone else

I don't think I'm advocating a "right to enforce" a view. What I think Epicurus and Philodemus are saying is that every person has the ability (NOT "right" - there are no abstract "rights") to make their own choices and avoidances. However, neither Epicurus nor Philodemus are going to stand by if a student in the Garden is making choices that will impede their progress to leading a pleasurable, less painful, life. Letting someone stumble willingly into pain is not the act of a friend.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of August 8, 2021 at 12:20 AM**

As i see it I don't disagree with Don's perspective and it is largely what I am trying to convey in my "both are true" comment. Yes I do think it is possible to generalize, but it is generalizing within a context, and the generalization is going to hold true only so long as the facts supporting it are true. And the main fact which is at the starting point is that there is no universalizing supernatural force or extradimensional ideal which can take the place of a contextual analysis.

I feel sure that people like Don and I would have no difficulty agreeing on many generalizations, and that have no issue with seeing the limits of our generalizations. But I think world human history shows that there is a great danger that these limits are very easy to forget, so my perspective is to stress the warnings that I think are even today very frequently needed.

And a large part of my view is influenced by some Latin that I used to think was exactly the right view until I saw it as the polar opposite of Epicurus, the part from Cicero's Republic which I think speaks directly to why we started discussing humanism. I believe this view was known to Epicurus and helps us see how his views are in opposition. Here is a version of the quote which I found at the link below, though I usually see it translated "True law is right reason in accord with nature...."

<https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4104&context=ndlr>

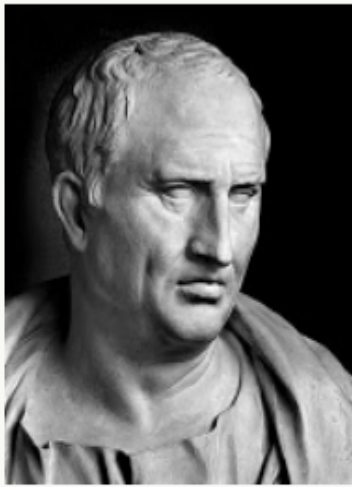
11 Thus in his work *De Republica* (Bk. III, ch. 22), Cicero wrote: "Right reason is indeed a true law, in accord with nature, diffused among all men, unchangeable, eternal. By its commands, it calls men to their duty, by its prohibitions it deters them from vice. For the upright, its commands and prohibitions are not in vain, but neither by commanding nor by prohibiting does it move the wicked. To pass laws contrary to this law is impious, to derogate from it is unlawful, to do away with it is wholly impossible. Neither the Senate nor the people can dispense from it, nor is any ulterior expounder and interpreter to be sought for. There shall no longer be one law at Rome and another at Athens, nor shall it prescribe one thing today, and another tomorrow, but one and the same law eternal and immutable shall be prescribed for all nations and all times, and the god who shall prescribe, introduce and promulgate this law shall be the one common lord and supreme ruler of all, and whosoever will refuse obedience to him shall be filled with confusion, as this very act will be a virtual denial of his human nature; and should he escape a present punishment, he shall have to endure heavy chastisement hereafter." In the *Pro Milone*, he stated: "There is a law, judges, not written, but born within us, which we have not learned or received by tradition, or read but which we took in and imbibed from nature itself, which we were not trained in, but which is ingrained in us."

12 For example, he wrote in his *Philippics* (xi, 12): "Law is nothing else than right reason derived from the gods, commanding what is honorable and forbidding the contrary."

This below is the version I usually see, and to which I would point as the common thread of there being a "**one eternal and unchangeable law [that] will be valid for all nations at all times.**" Of course Cicero wrote this long after Epicurus' time, but as Cicero fancied himself part of the "New Academy" I would think that some similar statement, or at least the seed of the idea, comes down from at least as far back as Plato himself.

It is almost as if the last ten PD's were written with the view of exactly refuting such a "one law for all people at all times" point of view.

## What is Right Reason?



Marcus Tullius Cicero

“True law is *right reason* in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting; it summons to duty by its commands, and averts from wrongdoing by its prohibitions...It is a sin to try to alter this law, nor is it allowable to repeal any part of it, and it is impossible to abolish it entirely. We cannot be freed from its obligations by senate or people, and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it. And there will not be different laws at Rome and

at Athens, or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and at all times, and there will be one master and ruler, that is God, over us all, for he is the author of this law, its promulgator and its enforcing judge. Whoever is disobedient is fleeing from himself and denying his human nature, and by reason of this very fact he will suffer the worst punishment.” – Marcus Tullius Cicero

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### Post by “Kalosyni” of August 8, 2021 at 12:29 AM

I'm appreciating reading everyone's insights here, and realizing I need to start some serious studying, since I have just barely begun to dip my toes into the philosophy of Epicurus.

This afternoon I read the article "The Philosophy for Millions" by DeWitt.

With regard to the discussion about my comment about "a worthwhile life"...Here is a quote from DeWitt's article:

"In spite of this teaching it was not the doctrine of Epicurus that pleasure was the greatest good. To his thinking the greatest good was life itself. This was a logical deduction from the denial of immortality. Without the afterlife this present life becomes the concentration of all values. **Pleasure, or happiness, has its place as the end, goal, or fulfillment of living.**

It was the Stoics and Cicero who concocted and publicized the false report that Epicurus counted pleasure as the greatest good. This is mistakenly asserted in all our handbooks."

So there are a lot of subtleties and nuances to examine, and I am thinking I need to take a good chunk of time to study, take notes, and write out any questions, before I do much more posting in this forum. (Plus, there is so many interesting threads posted inside the forum to read).

And this is also interesting from DeWitt's article:

"Outside of the school he instituted a method of disseminating his new doctrine by personal contacts. Each convert was urged to win over the members of his own household, his friends and neighbors, "never slackening in spreading by every means the doctrines of the true philosophy." Prospective converts were plied with books and tracts. Epicurus himself, like John Wesley, became a busy compiler of textbooks, and specific instructions were written for the proper use of them. He made outlines of doctrine for those who were unable to live in residence. The allegiance of disciples living in other cities was retained by epistles painstakingly composed. Thus the new school was transformed into a self-propagating sect."

So from this it seems there was quite a bit of dedication to passing on the teachings. And I would guess the teachings back then were much more exact and clear, without too many areas that were up for personal interpretation. But now, since so little of Epicurus' writings survived (and when so much of what did survive is mixed up with other schools of philosophy) it looks like there are a lot gray areas open to interpretation.

--- I am off to go study! 😊

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## Post by "Cassius" of August 8, 2021 at 12:39 AM

### [Quote from Philia](#)

It was the Stoics and Cicero who concocted and publicized the false report that Epicurus counted pleasure as the greatest good. This is mistakenly asserted in all our handbooks."

You will find that there is a lot of subtlety both in Epicurus and the way DeWitt presents Epicurus, much of which you'll probably appreciate no matter how far you get, and some of which you'll not accept - but having considered it will help you anyway, I would argue.

In this case, I would liken DeWitt's observation to his reference to the multiple meanings of the word "true" in the "[all sensations are true](#)" statement.

DeWitt wrote an article on the "Summum Bonum Fallacy" and you'll want to read that part of his book and consider it in detail. I think one way of interpreting what DeWitt and/or Epicurus was saying is that there are multiple meanings of the word "good" / "greatest good" that have to be considered.

A phrase that I remember from DeWitt is something to the effect that "pleasure and pain have meaning only to the living" and I think that is a very valid point - that Epicurus knew (PD2) that being alive is a precondition even to experiencing pleasure or pain. If that's part of the point, perhaps the issue is that a good can refer to an "asset" (such as for example a house) such that your greatest "good" may be your house (in terms of money value anyway) while it's also understood that in a more basic sense your greatest good is your life or health that allows you to live in it. And there's also "greatest good" in the sense of a "goal" or a "guide."

It does seem clear that Epicurus was wrestling with the Platonists and Peripatetics over straining too much over the meaning of the word "good" as further referenced by that fragment about those who walk around endlessly prattling about the meaning of good.

I sometimes think that it is better to think of pleasure as a "guide" rather than a "good" -- and indeed there's a phrase in Lucretius that Don can help us with the Latin on where Lucretius calls Venus / Pleasure what is translated as "divine pleasure, guide of life" (I think it's "**Dux vitae, dia voluptas**".) Book Two:

LUCRETIUS	DE RERUM NATURA
At quidam contra haec, ignari materiai, naturam non posse deum sine numine credunt tanto opere humanis rationibus admoderate 170 tempora mutare annorum frugesque creare, et iam cetera, mortalis quae suadet adire ipsaque deducit <u>dux vitae dia voluptas</u> et res per Veneris blanditur saecula propagent, ne genus occidat humanum. quorum omnia causa	167 But some <sup>a</sup> in opposition to this, knowing nothing of matter, believe that without the gods' power nature cannot with so exact conformity to the plans of mankind change the seasons of the year, and produce crops, and in a word all else which <u>divine pleasure,</u> <u>the guide of life,</u> persuades men to approach, herself leading them and coaxing them, through the ways of Venus, to beget their generations, that the human race may not come to an end. But when they imagine the gods to have arranged all for the sake of

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## Post by "Cassius" of August 8, 2021 at 7:52 AM

Also in this thread I think it would be good to point out that [Cicero's "On Duties"](#) would be an important point of reference that will help compare and contrast the view I am suggesting is in common between Stoicism and Humanism against that of Epicurus. [Don](#) I cannot remember if

you and I have discussed whether you read that. Years before I converted over to Epicurus, "On Duties" was one of my favorite classical works, and now in retrospect I think my affection for it made it a lot easier for me to come to terms with the dramatic difference between the "mainstream Greek" approach vs. Epicurus.

Although i don't recall that very much of it explicitly names Epicurus, views such as those of Epicurus are clearly the target. if I recall correctly you could pretty much characterize the whole think as "The Anti-Epicurean" almost as much as you could consider Nietzsche's "AntiChrist" to be anti-Christian.

#### Quote

Now, among the many important and useful subjects in philosophy that have been discussed by philosophers with precision and fulness of statement, their traditions and precepts concerning the duties of life seem to have the widest scope. [4]Indeed, no part of life, whether in public or in private affairs, abroad or at home, in your personal conduct or your social relations, can be free from the claims of duty; and it is in the observance of duty that lies all the honor of life, in its neglect, all the shame. This, too, is a theme common to all philosophers. For who would dare to call himself a philosopher, if he took no cognizance of duty? Yet there are some schools of philosophy that utterly pervert duty by the view which they propose as to the supreme good, and as to the opposite extreme of evil. For he who so interprets the supreme good as to disjoin it from virtue, and measures it by his own convenience, and not by the standard of right, — he, I say, if he be consistent with himself, and be not sometimes overcome by natural goodness, can cultivate neither friendship, nor justice, nor generosity; nor can he possibly be brave while he esteems pain as the greatest of evils, or temperate while he regards pleasure as the supreme good. These things, though too obvious to need discussion, I yet have discussed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Those schools, therefore, can, if self-consistent, say nothing about duty; nor can any precepts of duty, decisive, immutable, in accordance with nature, be promulgated, except by those who maintain that the right is to be sought solely,<sup>2</sup> or chiefly,<sup>3</sup> for its own sake. This [5]prerogative belongs to the Stoics, the Academics, and the Peripatetics; for the opinions of Ariston, Pyrrho, and Herillus<sup>1</sup> were long since exploded, though they might fittingly have discussed subjects pertaining to duty, if they had left any ground for the preference of one thing over another, so that there might be a way open for the ascertainment of duty. In this treatise I shall follow the Stoics, not as a translator, but drawing from their fountains at my own discretion and judgment, as much, and in such way, as may seem good.

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**Post by “Martin” of August 8, 2021 at 8:41 AM**

Welcome Philia!