

Natural Wealth and Natural Goods in Epicureanism

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 21, 2022 at 11:29 AM

I found this article, which may shed some light on Epicurean principles. I can see now from the few pages I started reading that this can help with understanding historical context and meaning. For example when we see the phrase "self-sufficiency" it most likely refers to the complete economic self-sufficiency of a household (which is very different than our current times). Also it explains the ancient idea that nature supplies an abundance (which also is very different than how we see things in modern times). And that back in ancient times there was the idea that a very large surplus could easily be had, and could led to pursuit of unnecessary desires (desires of grave excess). The article in a few places brings up Epicureanism and also gives references to other articles by others such as Voula Tsouna. (I only got a few pages in but looks like something maybe [Don](#) and [Godfrey](#) might like).

Retrospectives: What Did the Ancient Greeks Mean by "Oikonomia?"

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43710018>

Post by “Cassius” of July 21, 2022 at 11:41 AM

As for the issues of "wealth" such as we discussed last night from [PD15](#), we probably need to organize a special forum so we can compare what is in Philodemus' "Property Management" material. I will look into putting this thread there.

Post by “Don” of July 21, 2022 at 12:27 PM

There's also this thread on self-sufficiency from 2021 that might be of interest:

Post

[**RE: Autarkia And Epicurean Living In The Modern World**](#)

I also apologize, @Macario , but I should have directly responded to the DeWitt quoted passages. I'll try to do that over the weekend. I did see that this line:

[...]

seems to convey to me the idea of contentment in relation to *αυτάρκεια*.

Thank you again for engaging in this conversation. I know it's been valuable for me so far to get me to delve into this topic.



Don

September 17, 2021 at 8:15 PM

Post by “Pacatus” of July 21, 2022 at 1:29 PM

Interesting paper. (My academic background is economics – particularly labor economics; though my subsequent professional work was pension economics, first for a labor union and later for a pension trust. But all that was 20+ years ago.)

I do remember well that (neoclassical) economics eschewed any ethical viewpoint (e.g., the Robbins quote in the article). But that was (is) really a kind of deceit, since the single acceptable goal was “economic efficiency” (defined in terms of “Pareto optimality”). That put a real restraint on any discussion of income distribution, for example – or concern about people whose resource constraints kept them out of the market at all (think poverty-stricken households and healthcare). Proposals were often met with the objection: “But that wouldn’t be efficient!”

So, economic rationality was defined as efficient utility maximizing behavior via constrained choice (in the face of resource scarcity). This, of course, contrasts with the ancient Greek view of economic behavior “as rational when it was frugal in its use of means towards what they deemed as worthwhile ends.”

Bottom line: I don’t think that economics really can escape from ethical considerations.

I found it interesting (as a smalltime trader 😭) that Aristotle classed market trading as an “unnatural” wealth activity – apparently because it does not produce any productive, physical (in economic terms “real”) capital (I would include “technological capital”) – as opposed to merely “financial capital”, the accumulation of which may or may not be turned to productive use (“supplying people’s needs”).

As you can see, this paper stimulated some old memories. 😊 I have yet to read Philodemus, but hope to get to it soon.

Post by “Cassius” of July 21, 2022 at 2:00 PM

It's hard to get around investing the "natural / unnatural" distinction with our modern prejudices. I'd like to see us devote some attention at some point to working on really being sure whether the way those terms were used by the philosophers really track with the meanings we infer from them today.

Post by “Don” of July 21, 2022 at 2:32 PM

200. Don't think it unnatural (ἀφυσιολόγητον *aphysiologēton*) that when the body cries out, the soul cries also. The body says don't be hungry, don't be thirsty, don't be cold. It is difficult for the soul to prevent these cries, and dangerous for it to ignore the commands of nature because of attachment to its usual independence.

ἀφυσιολόγητον μηδὲν ἡγοῦ βρώσης τῆς σαρκὸς βοᾶν τὴν ψυχὴν· σαρκὸς δὲ φωνή· μὴ πεινῆν, μὴ διψῆν, μὴ ῥιγοῦν· καὶ ταῦτα τὴν ψυχὴν χαλεπὸν μὲν κωλύσαι, ἐπισφαλὲς δὲ παρακοῦσαι τῆς παραγγειλάσης φύσεως αὐτῇ τῆς προσφυοῦς αὐτῇ αὐταρκειᾶς καθ' ἡμέραν.

Otherwise, the phrasing appears to be:

οὔτε δὲ φυσικὰς οὔτ' ἀναγκαίᾶς

Neither natural nor necessary

I realize it's possibly pedantic, but the words natural and necessary are simply in a negative phrase: neither X nor Y. It's not the words "unnatural" and "unnecessary" themselves.

Please, if anyone sees otherwise, post your findings! 😊

Post by “Cassius” of July 21, 2022 at 2:38 PM

Thanks Don. I presume that most of us have the presumption that the "natural" is "good," and that which is "unnatural" or not natural, is "bad."

Probably that's far too superficial an analysis, however, and it would be good if we had a way to make clear, up front, that just like pain is sometimes to be chosen (but not for itself) that which is not natural may also deserve to be chosen under the Epicurean framework, and an explanation of how to make that analysis.

Post by “Pacatus” of July 21, 2022 at 2:51 PM

[Cassius](#)

From an ethical economics (oikonomia) point of view:

On the investment side of things, I would suggest productive/unproductive in supplying people's needs.

On the consumption side, I would suggest that (1) Epicurus' formulation on the naturalness & necessity of desires, and (2) the pleasure/pain hedonic calculus (toward eudaimonia - which I think of as sustainable happy well-being) would work.

Savings versus consumption decisions might connect the two (how much do I spend to meet my needs, and how much do I save - both to meet future consumption needs and to go toward productive investment?).

With regard to income/wealth distribution, I think one needs to define the concepts of just and unjust (in Epicurean terms). Maybe some synthesis of the utilitarian “the greatest good for the greatest number” and Rawls' theory of justice that any inequality in social and economic arrangements should give greater benefit to the least advantaged, each idea being modified by the other. And I wouldn't think we need to get much more complex than that, with regard to either theory. (Though Rawls included a personal liberty principle and an equal opportunity principle, all three principles needing to be balanced.) I'm not sure either one can stand on its own, but its been a long time since I really looked at them.

That's still pretty conceptual, as opposed to practical. (And I have just begun Philodemus). And I'm a bit tired today, so maybe not having a lot of clarity. 😞

Post by “Pacatus” of July 21, 2022 at 3:09 PM

By the way, this whole discussion has reminded me of a book I read years and years ago by British economist E.F. Schumacher, called *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. He advocated building self-reliant economies at the community level -- using mostly local resources to meet local needs (e.g. community gardens), and using appropriately-scaled technology that is user-friendly and ecologically sustainable.

Post by “Godfrey” of July 21, 2022 at 9:20 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

200. Don't think it unnatural (ἀφυσιολόγητον *aphysiologēton*) that when the body cries out, the soul cries also. The body says don't be hungry, don't be thirsty, don't be cold. It is difficult for the soul to prevent these cries, and dangerous for it to ignore the commands of nature because of attachment to its usual independence.

Good quote [Don](#) !

"...dangerous for it (the soul) to ignore the commands of nature because of attachment to its usual independence" is intriguing. This provides maybe the simplest description of vain desires: ignoring the commands of nature. And it implies the antidote: pay attention!

"...attachment to its usual independence" is less clear.

Post by “Don” of July 21, 2022 at 10:18 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

.dangerous for it (the soul) to ignore the commands of nature because of attachment to its usual independence" is intriguing. This provides maybe the simplest description of vain desires: ignoring the commands of nature. And it implies the antidote: pay attention!

"...attachment to its usual independence" is less clear.

And I just realized that that "independence" is our old friend αὐταρκείας autarkeias usually translated as "self-reliance"! I was too fixated on the first part!!

Post by “DavidN” of July 21, 2022 at 11:01 PM

I'll have to grab a copy of philodemus I'm suppose to be working on an epicurean economics treatise of sorts on SOFE. So I can share my findings on the forums as I go. Just have to finish slogging my way through one of Catherine Wilson's books first, she's a really good and well versed writer but very dry and technical.

Post by “Don” of July 21, 2022 at 11:04 PM

PD15 Ὁ τῆς φύσεως πλοῦτος καὶ ὠρίσται καὶ εὐπόριστός ἐστιν· ὁ δὲ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκπίπτει.

- Πλούτος wealth, riches
- ὠρίσται (verb 3rd sg perf ind mp redupl) divide, limit
- εὐπόριστός easy to procure
- ὁ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν empty beliefs
- ἄπειρον boundless, infinite (same word to describe the extent of the universe)

ἐκπίπτω

- 1. to fall out of a chariot, c. gen., Hom., etc.; c. dat. pers., τόξον δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε χειρός II.
- 2. of seafaring men, to be thrown ashore, Lat. ejici, Od., Hdt., etc.: of things, to suffer shipwreck, Xen.
- 3. to fall from a thing, i. e. be deprived of it, Lat. excidere, τινός or ἔκ τινος Aesch., etc.
- 4. to be driven out, of persons banished, Hdt., etc.
- 5. to go out or forth, sally out, id=Hdt., Xen.
- 6. to come out, of votes, id=Xen.
- 7. to escape, Thuc.
- 8. of oracles, to issue from the sanctuary, be imparted, Luc.
- 9. to depart from, digress, Xen., Aeschin.
- to fall off, come to naught, NTest.
- 11. of actors, to be hissed off the stage, Lat. explodi, Dem.
 - fut. -πεσοῦμαι

- αορ2 ἐξέπεσον
- Nature's treasure has boundaries and is easy to procure; the riches based on empty beliefs are infinite and always out of reach.

Don translation: Nature's treasure has boundaries and is easy to procure; the riches based on empty beliefs are infinite and always out of reach.

Hicks translation: Nature's wealth has its bounds and is easy to procure, but the wealth of vain fancies recedes to an infinite distance.

Saint-Andre translational: Natural wealth is both limited and easy to acquire, but the riches incited by groundless opinion are boundless.

Post by "Pacatus" of July 22, 2022 at 1:33 AM

Don

This really may go at the heart of (neoclassical) microeconomics, where economic agents are assumed to continually strive to maximize (personal) utility (at the margin - i.e. in the immediate present) in the face of income/resource constraints (scarcity) - and to try to expand the current bounds of those constraints (even at the expense, say, of future environmental costs). Traditional (neoclassical) economics recognizes no natural constraints on utility (pleasure/satisfaction) or potential wealth.

Any suggestion of natural bounds on utility maximization - which would mean a rational frugality in the face of the bounds of "natural wealth" (based on a hedonic calculus) - would be anathema to mainstream economics* (at least as I learned it). And that, it seems to me, might be the nub of an Epicurean alternative.

I haven't finished reading the essay on Philodemus yet, but it might also be related to his criticisms of Xenophon and Theophrastus?

EDIT: I like your translation of "natural treasures" -- which I would take to be a better understanding of natural resources than the word "wealth." Modifications to what I just wrote might thereby be warranted, but I am too tired to make them just now. 😞

* For a scholarly debunking of that economics, anyone interested should read Steve Keen's *Debunking Economics* (by which he means that neoclassical mainstream). It can be a tough read for those unfamiliar with the nitty-gritty of marginal analysis (or even for those who, like me, once were). Keen is an economist from Australia, who is one of those behind a blog-journal

called Real-World Economics – which I still get and peruse from time to time.

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 22, 2022 at 11:22 AM

I like Don's translation: " Nature's treasure has boundaries and is easy to procure; the riches based on empty beliefs are infinite and always out of reach."

The above article ("Retrospectives: What Did the Ancient Greeks Mean by "Oikonomia?") linked at the top of this thread, is very good at shedding some light on the meaning of this. Here are some excerpts:

Quote

A summary of Stoic and "Peripatetic" (meaning "Aristotelian") economic thought by Arius Didymus was saved, as well as treatises dedicated to economics by members of the Pythagorean (Callicratidas), Stoic (Hierocles), and Epicurean (Philodemus) schools.

By and large, these texts were addressing male citizens who headed well-to-do households and adhered to the values of the landed gentry. This meant that, on top of uncritical acceptance of enslavement and the subjection of women already mentioned, a valorization of self-sufficiency of the household (autarky) and a degree of scorn about market trading infused these works.

In the writings of the ancient Greeks, the life of the head of the household--the oikodesptes who was the addressee of these texts--was conducted in three dimensions: the spiritual realm of philosophy, the heroic realm of politics, and the economic realm. The role of the economic dimension was to secure the means necessary for existence and to generate a surplus that sustained the two other dimensions that were deemed worthy of man. This could be done in two ways: either by increasing production or by moderating consumption.

Economic theory distinguished between four different possible ethical dispositions (corresponding to philosophical life, political life, luxurious life, and economic life). It discussed the surplus generated by the economy and the means suited to achieve what

was deemed the best ethical disposition.

Modern economists hold that means are scarce. However, the ancient Greeks saw nature as potentially capable of satisfying all of man's needs if economized rationally (for example from Aristotle, see Polanyi 1968, pp. 98-9, in Epicurean and Cynic economics, see Tsouna 2007, pp. 178-80). Moreover, nature was assumed to provide for much more than man's needs, and thus a limit had to be placed on engagement in wealth generation that might otherwise lead men to lose sight of the good life. The need to set a limit to indulgence in wealth generation on the one hand, and the threat of submerging oneself in a luxurious life on the other, meant that nature was seen not just as the means to sustain humanity abundantly, but also excessively.

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Epicurus would have studied and known the other existing philosophies, and it would be interesting so be clear about how his views were either similar or different than Aristotelian views -- especially regarding natural, necessary, and unnatural.

In the article jumping to the section on "Abundance, Surplus, and Economic Rationality" which starts on page 230, brings up Aristotle views about these terms.

Will post more on this later.

Post by "Don" of July 22, 2022 at 11:24 AM

If anyone is curious from our last 20th get together, here is the play by Aristophanes entitled Wealth (Πλούτος , Plutus is the Latinized spelling since, evidently, *everything* has to be spelled like the Romans did it 😬)

[Plutus \(play\) - Wikipedia](#)

Post by "Pacatus" of July 22, 2022 at 3:00 PM

I have finished reading the Philodemus essay, and also found this interpretation by Tim O'Keefe: "The Epicureans on happiness, wealth, and the deviant craft of property

management" (Tim O'Keefe, Georgia State University) It is downloadable free as a Word doc here: https://www.academia.edu/9994257/The_Ep...card=view-paper

O'Keefe sees Philodemus' objection to the oikonomia of Theophrastus and Xenophon as a *techne* is that that is an expertise aimed at both preserving and maximizing wealth. He contrasts this with simply attaining "'natural wealth' that is needed to satisfy our natural and necessary desires [and] is limited and easy to obtain." For the Epicurean, then, property management does not require some special expertise (*techne*), but simple practical knowledge.

In his conclusion, O'Keefe employs modern economic terms, describing the oikonomia of Theophrastus and Xenophon as "*maximizing*" behavior, and describes the Epicurean as following "*satisficing*" behavior: "When it comes to wealth, then, the Epicurean Sage is a satisficer and not a maximizer: she will not spend a lot of time worrying about finding the option that gets her the best financial return, but will go ahead and act once she's found an option that's good enough. And given the Epicurean conception of what we need in order to satisfy our natural and necessary desires, 'good enough' is easy to achieve."

In economics, "*satisficing*" is a behavior which attempts to achieve at least some minimum (satisfactory) level of a particular variable, but which does not necessarily maximize its value. [Herbert Simon, 1978 Nobel laureate in economics]

O'Keefe also notes that, in modern economic terms, oikonomia would fall under heading of microeconomics, as opposed to macroeconomics - dealing with such things as inflation, unemployment, income distribution, government fiscal policy, etc. - which would be considered part of *politike*.

Post by "Cassius" of July 22, 2022 at 4:48 PM

O'Keefe's title is "... on the DEVIANT craft of property management"?

It was not my understanding that Philodemus took a negative attitude toward property management.

I need a big caveat on my comments about this thread that I really need to read some of this material before commenting extensively. I have the Voula Tsouna book but it has been too long since I read it.

Scanning over it now I see this from page XXVI

Quote

According to Philodemus, Cynics and Epicureans agree that the best life is free from toil and worry but disagree as to how it can be attained, especially in respect of the possession and administration of wealth. On the one hand, the Cynics advocate a beggarly lifestyle for the reason that wealth is troublesome and, therefore, harmful to one's peace of mind.

On the other hand, Metrodorus maintains that a peaceful and happy life is obtained not by avoiding all toils and efforts but by opting for things that may involve a certain amount of trouble at present but relieve us of much greater concerns in the future. Wealth is such a thing, as are health and friendship. Although its possession and administration doubtless requires thought and labor, it is better to have it than not, for its presence allows the virtuous man to live pleasantly, whereas its absence is responsible for deprivation and distress. The only way in which the Cynics might be able to establish that the possession of natural wealth (φυσικὸς πλοῦτος , XIV.19) 22 is less preferable to the daily provision of goods would be to prove that, in fact, the former entails more pains and efforts than the latter. However, following Metrodorus's line, Philodemus suggests that it is highly unlikely that such a proof would be forthcoming. One practical implication of the Epicurean position is that the good person should not reject as useless the wealth that may come his way. The entire argument is based on the rational calculation of pleasures and pains and also makes use of the concept of natural wealth, which is related to the concept of the measure of wealth (πλούτου μέτρον). 23 Since Philodemus's presentation of Epicurean οἰκονομία (property management) involves both these notions, I shall explain them briefly.

In outline, natural wealth is one of the many objects that we naturally seek in order to satisfy natural desires and thus feel pleasure. In so far as this kind of desire has a limit, natural wealth also has a limit, and, besides, it is easy to obtain (Epicurus, Sent. 15) precisely because it is natural (Epicurus, Ep. Men. 130). 24 Correspondingly, the measure of wealth

that is appropriate for the philosopher covers the range of the philosopher's natural needs. "There is for the philosopher a measure of wealth that, [following] the founders of the school, we have passed down in [the treatise] On Wealth, resulting in an account of the capacity to administer the acquisition of this and the preservation of this" (XII.17-25). Further, in so far as the measure of wealth satisfies the philosopher's natural needs, it is slightly superior (De div. LI.27-30) or, from another perspective (see De oec. XIV.9-23), clearly preferable to poverty. In fact, there is tension in Philodemus's position. On the one hand, he emphasizes the instrumental importance of wealth and its administration for the good life. On the other hand, following the authorities of the school, he holds on to the view

that the difference between possessing and lacking wealth, and between preserving it and not preserving it, is but small (XVIII.25–31), and he suggests that the superiority of wealth is mainly practical rather than moral.

Roughly, the position that he maintains is the following. “More” wealth may be better than “less,” because of the serenity and the material comforts that it affords when it is correctly used. Further, “more” wealth can be interpreted in many ways, since Philodemus does not fix precisely how much money and possessions are optimal for the philosophical life. On the other hand, “more” corresponds somehow to “the measure of wealth” but never amounts to the open-ended goal of traditional οἰκονομία, namely, to amass as many riches as possible through decent and lawful means.

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Post by “Cassius” of July 22, 2022 at 5:05 PM

If we conclude that Philodemus / Metrodorus in fact says what is summarized here, this bears on many of our recent discussions.

Quote

On the other hand, Metrodorus maintains that a peaceful and happy life is obtained not by avoiding all toils and efforts but by opting for things that may involve a certain amount of trouble at present but relieve us of much greater concerns in the future. Wealth is such a thing, as are health and friendship. Although its possession and administration doubtless requires thought and labor, it is better to have it than not, for its presence allows the virtuous man to live pleasantly, whereas its absence is responsible for deprivation and distress.

Post by “Godfrey” of July 23, 2022 at 1:21 AM

Quote from Cassius

In outline, natural wealth is one of the many objects that we naturally seek in order to satisfy natural desires and thus feel pleasure.

A very good snippet re: desires and pleasure 👍 I pasted this for that in particular, natural is a separate issue.

Post by “Cassius” of July 23, 2022 at 6:34 AM

Yes we ought to get some good info out of Philodemus about the meaning of "natural."

Post by “Pacatus” of July 23, 2022 at 1:03 PM

[Cassius](#)

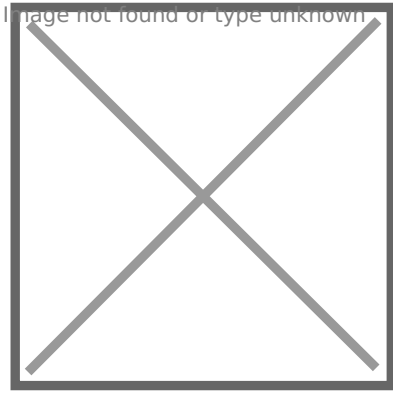
Yes, "deviant" certainly is a weird word here. I'd suggest that what he's after is the oikonomia that requires a techne because it goes beyond (deviates from) the natural (Epicurean) bounds, i.e. with its maximizing aim. That kind of oikonomia seems to match that last line of the Tsouna quote: "On the other hand, 'more' corresponds somehow to 'the measure of wealth' but never amounts to the open-ended goal of traditional οἰκονομία, namely, to amass as many riches as possible through decent and lawful means."

Still, a strange word choice.

Now I have to go watch some baseball. 😊

Post by “Don” of August 14, 2022 at 6:13 AM

I just came across this paper:



[Horace, Ofellus and Philodemus of Gadara in Sermones 2.2](#)

This paper examines Horace's portrayal in Sermones 2.2 of Ofellus, the poet's rustic spokesman whose recent loss of property provides the opportunity...

www.academia.edu

Good analysis of Epicurean themes in Horace. Still reading but seems solid. One basic thread is the encouragement to be satisfied with little - to take pleasure in little - if circumstances change and little, ie, only the basics, is all you have.

Post by "Cassius" of August 14, 2022 at 7:20 AM

It makes 100% sense to me that we should take pleasure in little if little is all we have. Seems to me that it's very hard to quibble with that.

The tougher rhetorical issue seems to me to be "Is it inherent within the expression of that thought that little is 'good enough' and therefore we should not act to seek more than little?"

I think a lot of people jump to that conclusion, perhaps influenced by Stoic and many other sources of ideas, but I do not at all think that conclusion is necessarily implied, and I get the idea that most of the ancients and all of the Epicureans would think such a suggestion to be absurd, because it is natural for all life to pursue as much pleasure as is open to it to obtain without undue hardship.

I write this because Don if you see anything in that article or Horace which bears on that subject please bring it up. Epicurus makes it plain in the letter to Menoeceus that we do not set our sites on "little" but on "pleasure", and I bet there are other instances of the same thought out there in other texts.

When Horace said "Seize the day" he didn't say "Seize little" or "Seize only what will keep you alive."

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 14, 2022 at 8:13 AM

Here is an interesting excerpt from the above article that [Don](#) posted, which says that Epicureanism appealed to all walks of life:

Quote

Unlike the Stoics, moreover, whose philosophical ideal was extreme enough to elicit playful sarcasm from Horace (cf. Ep. 1.1.106-108), Epicurus' universal invitation to philosophy (Arr. 4.122.1-11) **effectively attracted Romans from all walks of life**, including, as Cicero notes, respectable but uneducated rustics like Ofellus. As a matter of fact, Epicurus even states that, like Ofellus, the sage will be 'fond of the countryside' (φιλαγρήσειν, Arr. 1.120a.2) and will closely associate the practice of philosophy with economic matters (Γεῖν ἅμα δεῖ καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν, 'One must laugh and philosophize and manage one's economic affairs', Arr. 6.41). One may reasonably wonder, therefore, whether this connection influenced Horace's choice to portray his sage as a country-dwelling local whose advice is economic in nature...

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 14, 2022 at 8:33 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurus makes it plain in the letter to Menoeceus that we do not set our sites on "little" but on "pleasure" , and I bet there are other instances of the same thought out there in other texts.

I do believe there is evidence for both **the goal of pleasure AND the goal of well-being, at the same time** -- because Epicureans seek both sides of removing pain and adding in pleasure -- and this could be the difference between Cyreniacs and Epicureans? For Cyreniacs pleasure was physical and only in the present moment, but for Epicureans it is inclusive of bodily, mental, and memory. So for the Cyreniacs over-indulgence (profligacy) would be an okay choice -- but for Epicureans if physical pleasure brings mental regret, than it would be avoided (or avoided if it brings painful consequences).

[Quote from Cassius](#)

When Horace said "Seize the day" he didn't say "Seize little" or "Seize only what will keep you alive."

I may not correctly understand this idea, but it does seem to justify "seizing" upon one's passions and possibly disregarding the consequences of one's actions -- but maybe that is just a modern interpretation. So I think it is necessary to find the "sweet spot" on this - neither extremes of over-indulgence nor austere frugality.

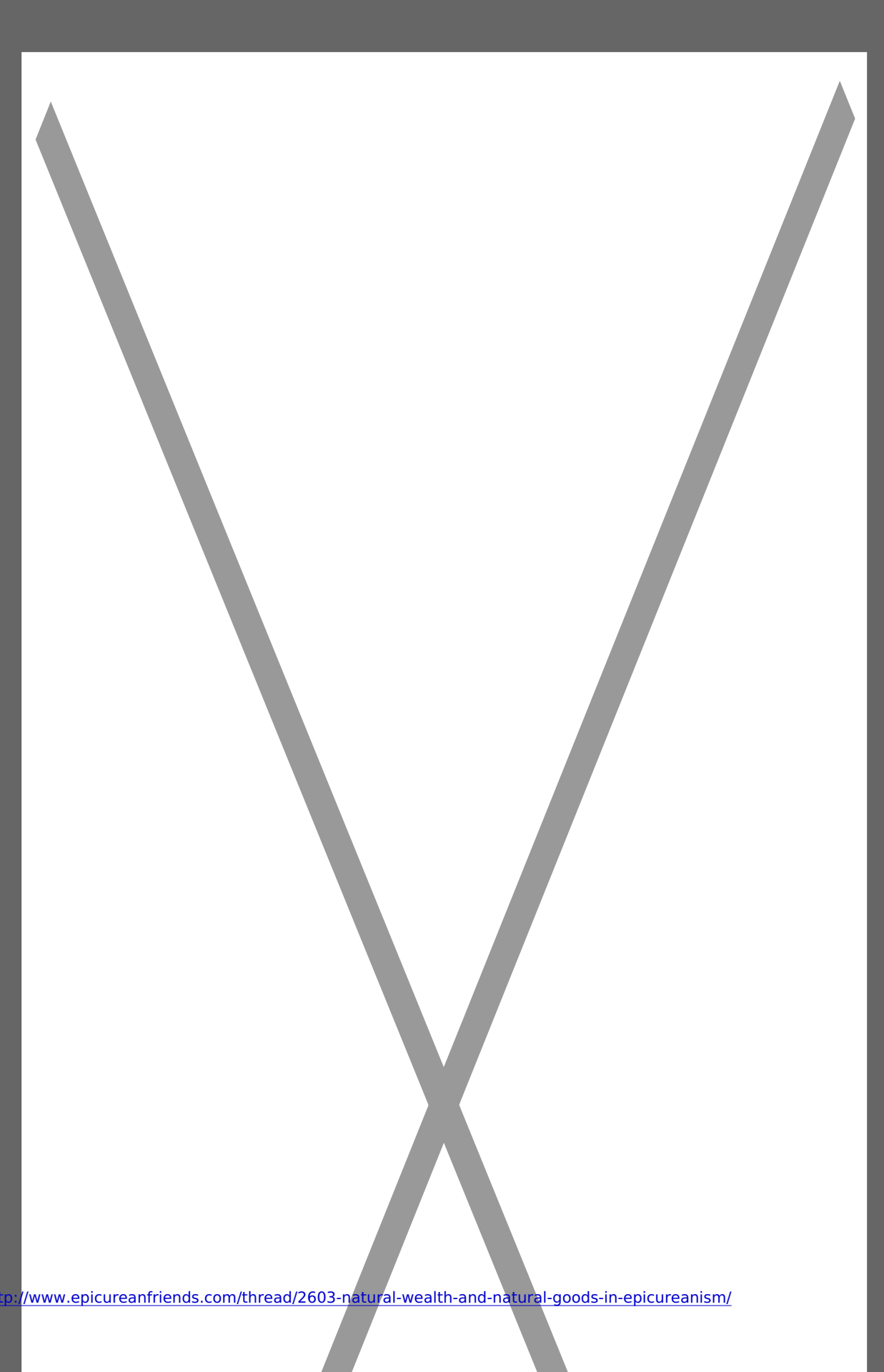
I realize that I need to come back to this thread and add more regarding Epicurean natural goods.

Post by "Don" of August 14, 2022 at 9:04 AM

Okay, "seize the day" has been so in-grained in modern Western popular culture to equate with FOMO (Fear of missing out) or constantly seeking new thrilling experiences that I feel obliged to urge everyone to take a look at Horace's original.

Wikipedia actually has a nice article:

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[Carpe diem - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

To me, I prefer the more literal "Pluck the day" or "Harvest the day".

Compare Greek καρπός (karpós, "fruit") and κείρω (keírō, "to cut off"), English harvest, sharp, shear.

"Seize" always has such a frenzied feel to it. Seizing, grasping, clutching... And that's not what the original means.

I envision Horace plucking a ripe peach from a tree and sinking his teeth into its perfect, juicy flesh.