

# Philodemus of Gadara - Main Biography

Post by “Cassius” of November 20, 2023 at 3:23 PM

[Philodemus - Wikipedia](#)

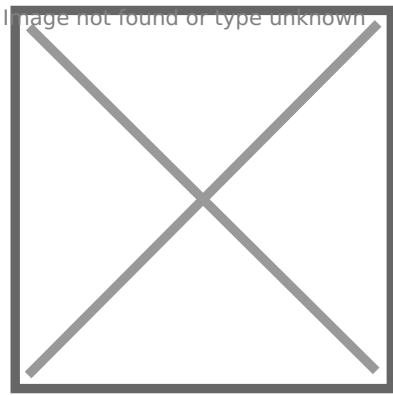
Philodemus of Gadara ([Greek](#): Φιλόδημος ὁ Γαδαρεύς, Philodēmos, "love of the people"; c. 110 – prob. c. 40 or 35 BC) was an [Epicurean philosopher](#)[1] and [poet](#). He studied under [Zeno of Sidon](#) in [Athens](#), before moving to [Rome](#), and then to [Herculaneum](#). He was once known chiefly for his poetry preserved in the [Greek Anthology](#), but since the 18th century, many writings of his have been discovered among the charred papyrus rolls at the [Villa of the Papyri](#) at [Herculaneum](#). The task of excavating and deciphering these rolls is difficult, and work continues to this day. The works of Philodemus so far discovered include writings on [ethics](#), [theology](#), [rhetoric](#), [music](#), [poetry](#), and the history of various [philosophical schools](#). Ethel Ross Barker suggested in 1908 that he was owner of the Villa of the Papyri Library.[2]

Life

Philodemus was born c. 110 BC, in [Gadara](#), [Coele-Syria](#) (in present-day [Jordan](#)).[3] He studied under the Epicurean Phoenician philosopher, [Zeno of Sidon](#), the head ([scholarch](#)) of the [Epicurean](#) school, in Athens, before settling in [Rome](#) about 80 BC. He was a follower of Zeno, but an innovative thinker in the area of [aesthetics](#), in which conservative Epicureans had little to contribute. He was a friend of [Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus](#), and was implicated in Piso's profligacy by [Cicero](#),[4] who, however, praises Philodemus warmly for his philosophic views and for the elegans lascivia of his poems.[5] Philodemus was an influence on Horace's [Ars Poetica](#). The [Greek anthology](#) contains thirty-four of his [epigrams](#) - most of them, love poems.

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Post by “Don” of November 30, 2023 at 6:39 AM



### [Philodemus and Epicurean Philosophy: Changing Perceptions](#)

This paper focuses on the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus of Gadara (c. 110 BCE to c. 40 or 35 BCE), who lived and worked in Italy during the late Roman...

[www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)

A paper looking at Epicurus's philosophy in general and Philodemus's contribution in particular.

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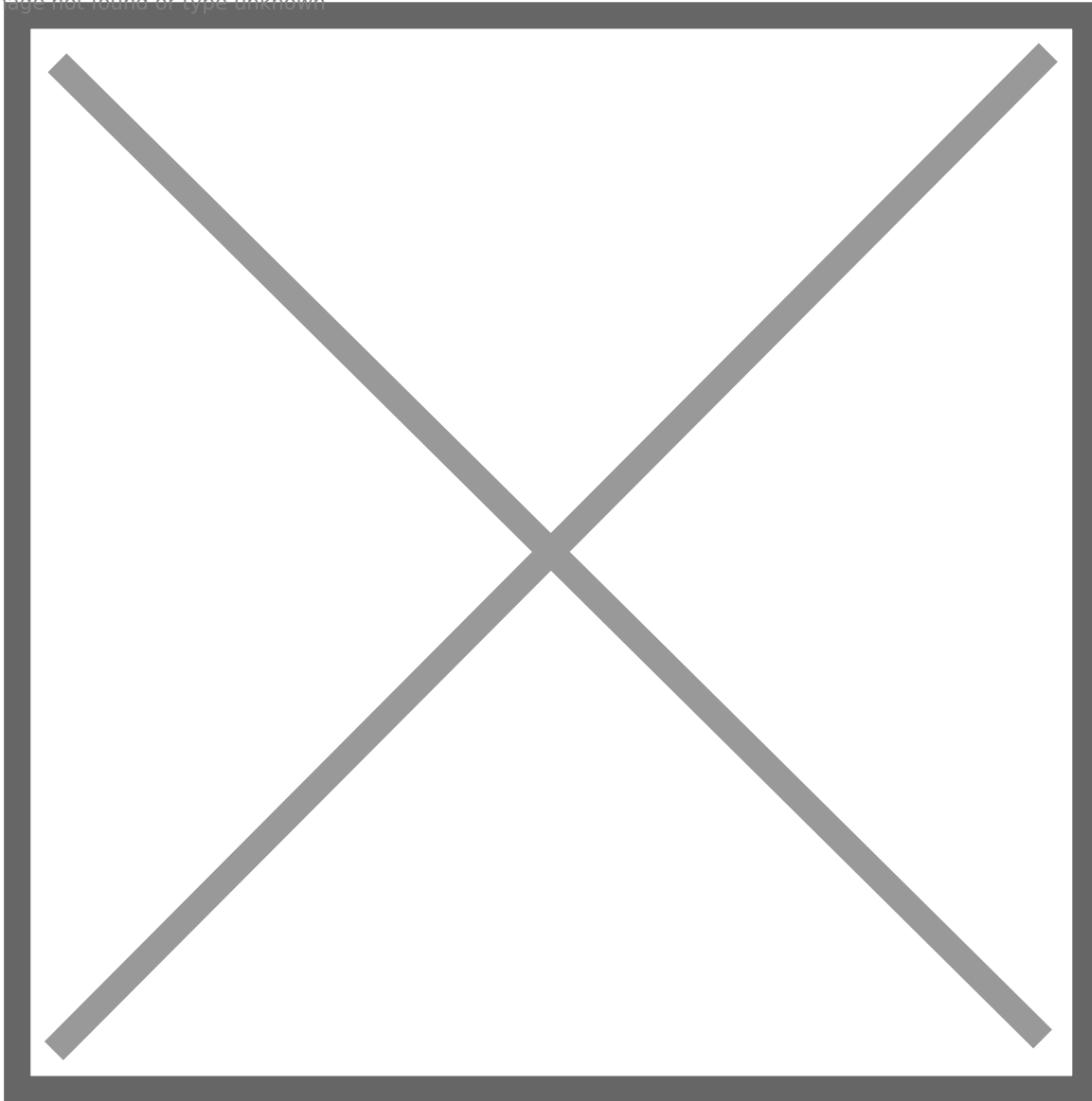
### **Post by “Pacatus” of November 30, 2023 at 4:02 PM**

From the paper cited by [Don](#) in post #2: “The outcome of clearer editions has been to show that Philodemus made significant contributions to the development of Epicurean doctrines, which in turn has led to the realisation that Epicureans were not nearly as dogmatic and unchanging as our hostile sources had led us to believe.”

It seems clear that the author is using “dogmatic” in the pejorative sense of “disposed to make positive assertions without presenting arguments or evidence” (from the 17th century), and not in the original sense of holding opinions/beliefs (such as that it is possible to know things about the real world: knowledge – as opposed to the dogma of the Academic Skeptics that knowledge was impossible, or the agnosticism on the subject of Pyrrhonians). In the original sense, there seems to have been no connotation that such beliefs could not require evidentiary grounding – which, in the context of Epicurus’ teachings, is provided by the senses, feelings and prolepsis.

And Philodemus, at least, allowed for analogical inference from sense-experience to what is not so sensed (and that might be viewed as a precursor to modern inductive reasoning and logical inference).

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[dogmatic | Etymology of dogmatic by etymonline](#)

DOGMATIC: "disposed to make positive assertions without presenting arguments or evidence;" 1706, "pertaining to or... See origin and meaning of dogmatic.  
[www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)

[δόγμα - Wiktionary, the free dictionary](#)

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**Post by "Don" of November 30, 2023 at 4:48 PM**

Fully agree, [Pacatus](#)!

I go back to the characteristic of the sage usually translated as "Hicks: He will be a dogmatist but not a mere sceptic." People take that "dogmatist" in the modern sense of the word and see it as a fault in the Epicureans. But juxtaposed against the "sceptic," it means something more nuanced.

Here's my page on my site that talks about that from my perspective:

[Epicurean Sage - Declare their beliefs and not remain in doubt](#)

Hicks: He will be a dogmatist but not a mere sceptic; Yonge: he will pronounce dogmas, and will express no doubts; Mensch: He will assert his opinions and will...  
sites.google.com

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### Post by "Pacatus" of November 30, 2023 at 5:32 PM

[Don](#) I simply take it as a correct and valid belief that *hedone*, *aponia* and *ataraxia* (taken together) are not merely the keys to eudaimonia - but **define the very contours of eudaimonia**. Not because Epicurus said so, but because the arguments he presented conform to the most reasonable (to me) assessment of the evidence from nature and science - and I cannot imagine what else eudaimonia could be (other than some abstract ideal notion, which is simply taken as axiomatic, beyond the reach of empirical investigation). As Mr. Monk always said: "I could be wrong - but I don't think so." 😊

[Note: I am (slowly) re-reading Haris Dimitriadis' chapter on "The Biology of Happiness": Chapter 3 of his *Epicurus and the Pleasant Life: the Philosophy of Nature*.]

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Mr. Monk: from the TV detective series "Monk." 😊

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### Post by "Don" of November 30, 2023 at 6:20 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Not because Epicurus said so, but because the arguments he presented conform to the most reasonable (to me) assessment of the evidence from nature and science

Well put!!

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### **Post by “Pacatus” of November 30, 2023 at 6:26 PM**

I want to add, as a "late edit" to my last post that the Mr. Monk quote is not an expression of doubt, simply a nod to objective (albeit unlikely) possibility: i.e., recognition that one is not omniscient. In other words, it is not a statement of skepticism (per [Don](#) 's "Epicurean Sage" essay that he linked in post #4 above).