

February 5, 2024 - First Monday Epicurean Philosophy Discussion

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 29, 2024 at 2:27 PM

February 5th, 2024 - 8pm ET



First Monday

Epicurean Philosophy Zoom Discussion



Discussion topic:

What does the philosophy of Epicurus (and Lucretius) have to say about love?

Agenda:

- Meet-and-greet
- Special topic
- Open discussion

Aeneas Introducing Cupid
Dressed as Ascanius to Dido
(1757) by Tintoretto

Coming up next Monday is "First Monday Epicurean Philosophy Discussion" - Via Zoom at 8pm ET - Open to forum members.

We now see in stores all the Valentine's hype, so a fun special topic to discuss is: "What does the philosophy of Epicurus have to say about love?" And if we take the big picture view of Epicurean philosophy, let's see if there is anything which we can apply to our lives today.

We'll also have time for open discussion beyond the special topic, such as current popular forum threads or questions.

For those who haven't attended before, let us know if you are interested by posting in this thread or message Cassius or myself.

Post by "Pacatus" of January 29, 2024 at 3:20 PM

Ah, ever the zealous romantic - I,
painting butterflies on philosophy,
whilst drawing on the Canon redes to keep
sane amidst the raucous insanity,
wonder on love: embrace, and laugh - and weep.

+++++

"rede" - (archaic) counsel, advice, guide.



Post by "Bryan" of January 29, 2024 at 3:22 PM

I dont think I have attended one of the Monday meetings before, but I'd like to tonight!

Post by "Cassius" of January 29, 2024 at 3:35 PM

| [Quote from Bryan](#)

I dont think I have attended one of the Monday meetings before, but I'd like to tonight!

Unfortunately it's "First Monday" which this month means NEXT Monday!

Post by “Bryan” of January 29, 2024 at 3:57 PM

wow, that makes sense, well I'll be ready then!

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 29, 2024 at 6:13 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

wow, that makes sense, well I'll be ready then!

It should be a fun discussion!

I can...or anyone else, who wants to post here some direct quotes from Lucretius, Vatican Sayings, Diogenes Laertius, etc. ...anything that touches on the special topic "On Love"...would be great! 😊

(In our upcoming discussion, of course we will need to consider all the many meanings of the word "love").

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 29, 2024 at 6:23 PM

Here is this excerpt from Diogenes Laertius Book X:

Quote

Also that in his letters he wrote to Leontion, "O Lord Apollo, my dear little Leontion, with what tumultuous applause we were inspired as we read your letter." Then again to Themista, the wife of Leonteus : "I am quite ready, if you do not come to see me, to spin thrice on my own axis and be propelled to any place that you, including Themista, agree upon" ; and to the beautiful Pythocles he writes : "I will sit down and await thy divine advent, my heart's desire." And, as Theodorus says in the fourth book of his work, *Against Epicurus*, in another letter to Themista he thinks he preaches to her.¹⁰ [6] It is added that he corresponded with many courtesans, and especially with Leontion, of whom Metrodorus also was enamoured. It is observed too that in his treatise *On the Ethical End* he writes in these

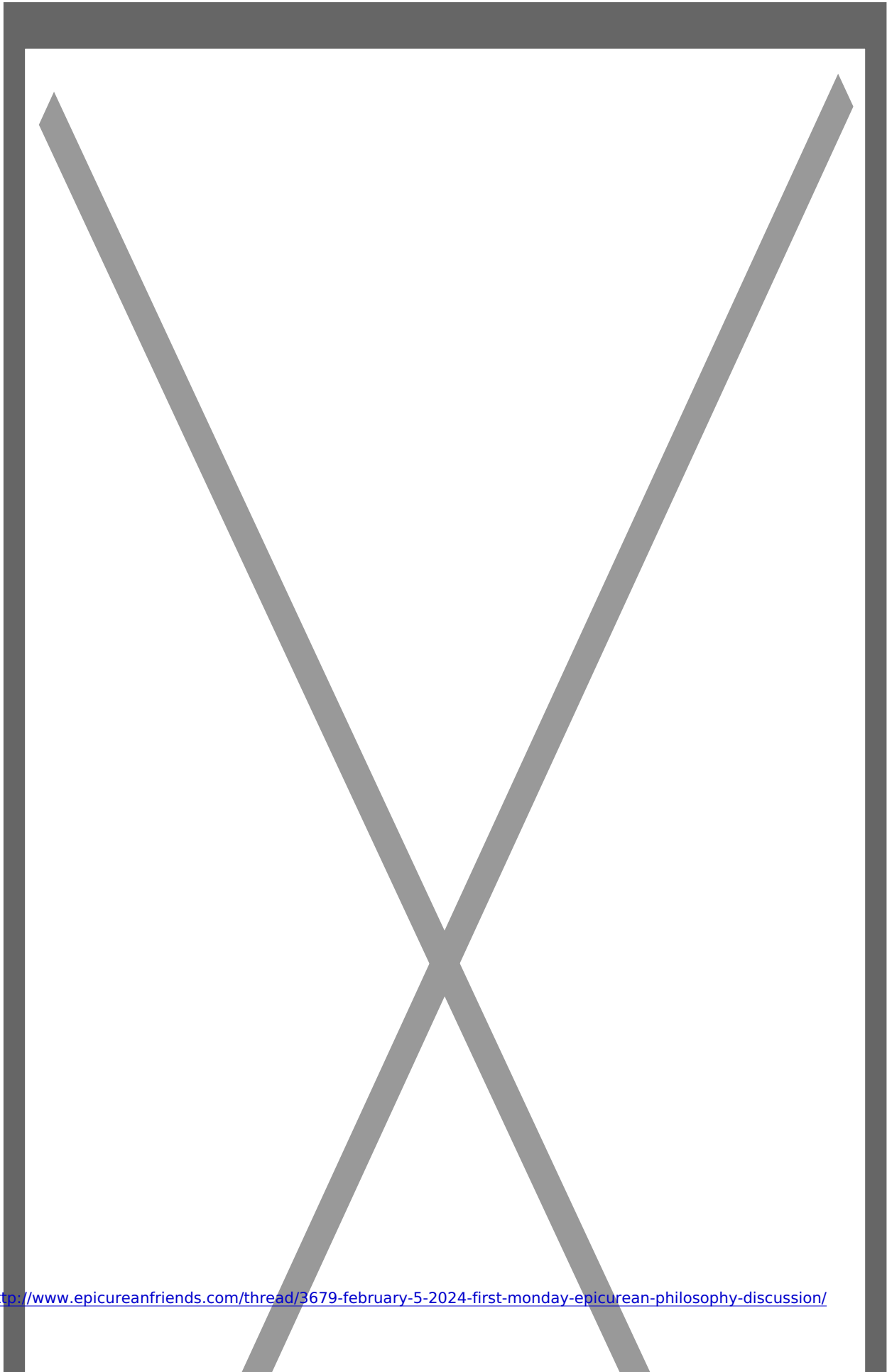
terms¹¹ : "I know not how to conceive the good, apart from the pleasures of taste, sexual pleasures, the pleasures of sound and the pleasures of beautiful form."

[Source](#)

Post by "Don" of January 29, 2024 at 7:03 PM

FYI...

Image not found or type unknown



Post by “Kalosyni” of January 30, 2024 at 10:26 AM

Today it is coming up in my mind about this particular topic, that since there isn't very much remaining --- Diogenes Laertius lists that Epicurus wrote a book "On Love" (we can only hope it is laying in waiting to be digitally read amongst the chard scrolls of Herculanium) --- and so we will need to gather all the scant evidence from the extant texts and make inferences about it.

Love and the "objects" of love (and with relevance to Valentine's Day since now marketing includes every kind of relationship).

- friends
- spouse (or life partner)
- family (children, parents, siblings, etc)
- lovers (modern times = "friends with benefits" and ancient times = "hetairai")

We have this section on the forum (which I will need to study):

[Philodemus On Methods of Inference](#)

Post by “Don” of January 30, 2024 at 12:02 PM

Just a quick note on Epicurus' book. The title listed as On Love is Περὶ ἔρωτος (Peri erōtos). Erōtos is from ἔρωξ erōs and is where English gets "erotic" so the topic of the book must be "love, mostly of the sexual passion": [See LSJ entry for the word](#).

The word shows up in Laertius in the characteristics of the sage (118): No one was ever the better for *sexual indulgence*, and it is well if he be not the worse.

And the list of hetairai (7): Also that among other courtesans who consorted with him and Metrodorus were Mammarrion and Hedia and *Erotion* and Nikidion

I'm sure it shows up in Philodemus but that's it for DL.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 2, 2024 at 3:19 PM

In De Rerum Natura Book 4 Lucretius writes on the passion of love (Lucretius 4.1058)

I found this interesting excerpt from a JSTOR article on Lucretius:

Quote

Yet another factor in Lucretius' treatment of love is concerned in a different way with the concept of romantic love. What Lucretius is attacking is a romantic and obsessive attitude to love which may have existed in life, then and now, and which we certainly find reflected and amplified in literature. In a sense the models of fiction are always more powerful than life, so that Lucretius was right to consider them a special danger; Plato would have agreed with him. Literary models of obsessive love have ranged from Phaedra to Proust's Swann. A particular model that may be useful here is the poet-lover in Catullus' love poems. Since Catullus was contemporary with Lucretius, it is reasonable to assume that he represents attitudes with which Lucretius was familiar. Lucretius' satire on

love gains even more point if it is read as a commentary on the way of life of the Catullan lover. Some critics have claimed that Lucretius is criticizing Catullus' own words and the way of life of his circle of friends; we may at least take the Catullan lover as an example of the type Lucretius has in mind, a type that existed in Latin literature, especially in the sub-category *exclusus amator*, as early as Plautus and Terence.² This type

exemplifies a rival kind of withdrawal from everyday Roman life and perhaps even an insidious popularized form of Epicureanism which Lucretius may well have been anxious to combat.

"Lucretius and Love" - Aya Betensky

The Classical World, Vol. 73, No. 5 (Feb., 1980), pp. 291-299 (9 pages)

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4349198>

On [Catullus](#), from Wikipedia:

Quote

It was probably in Rome that Catullus fell deeply in love with the "[Lesbia](#)" of his poems, who is usually identified with [Clodia Metelli](#), a sophisticated woman from the

aristocratic house of patrician family Claudii Pulchri, sister of the infamous [Publius Clodius Pulcher](#), and wife to proconsul Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer. In his poems Catullus describes several stages of their relationship: initial euphoria, doubts, separation, and his wrenching feelings of loss. Clodia had several other partners; "From the poems one can adduce no fewer than five lovers in addition to Catullus: Egnatius (poem 37), Gellius (poem 91), Quintius (poem 82), Rufus (poem 77), and Lesbius (poem 79)."

Regarding marriage and adultery in ancient Rome I also read [on Wikipedia](#):

Quote

During the Republican era, marriage, divorce and adultery were matters dealt with by the families concerned. Falling marriage and birth rates in the Later Republic and early Empire led to state intervention. Adultery was made a crime, for which citizen-women could be punished by divorce, fines and demotion in social status; men's sexual activity was adultery only if committed with a married citizen-woman. Families were also offered financial incentives to have as many children as possible. Both interventions had minimal effect.

And so we need to take into consideration the historical context of the time in which Lucretius wrote *De Rerum Natura*.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 4, 2024 at 3:37 PM

For tomorrow night's discussion topic:

"Romantic Love and Friendship in Epicurean Philosophy"

I will bring up some fun questions to spur on the discussion.

This meeting is especially a great place for newer members to meet-and-greet others who are studying the philosophy of Epicurus. Let us know if you are interested by posting here (or by private message).

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Post by “Lowri834” of February 4, 2024 at 6:17 PM

I am planning to attend. Thanks for hosting and background info in the thread.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 4, 2024 at 7:35 PM

[Lowri834](#) thanks for the RSVP, and looking forward to seeing you there 😊

Post by “Bryan” of February 6, 2024 at 9:09 PM

(Philodemus - On the Stable Conduct of the Gods - Book 3, P.Herc. 157 fr. 76) "...but the conviviality can reach such a level that one might drink excessively, babble incoherently, dance without shame, and engage in other such unrefined activities. As for the nature of love (ἔρως), it's not even right to speak of it as a virtue, given that the act of falling in love is found to be extremely harmful and chaotic. Love, after all, borders on madness."

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 6, 2024 at 9:54 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

As for the nature of love (ἔρως), it's not even right to speak of it as a virtue, given that the act of falling in love is found to be extremely harmful and chaotic. Love, after all, borders on madness."

ἔρως = sexual love

And this sounds like it is describing extreme infatuation.

Post by "Bryan" of May 5, 2024 at 2:09 PM

I wanted to throw these in here as well, from D.L. 10.118. I feel as though there is room for a more "positive" interpretation of agapeton.

Usener Text: Συνουσίη ὤνησε μὲν οὐδέποτε - ἀγαπητὸν δ' εἰ μὴ ἔβλαψε.

"Intimacy never benefited - but one must be content if it has not harmed."

Henderson Text: Συνουσίαν δέ φασιν ὄνησαι μὲν οὐδέποτε - ἀγαπητὸν δὲ εἰ μὴ καὶ ἔβλαψε.

"They say that intimacy never benefited - but one must be content if it has not also harmed."

ἀγαπητός verb. adj. ἀγαπάω,

I. [select] *beloved*, of an *only* son, **Hom., Dem.**

II. [select] of things, *worthy of love, loveable, dear*, **Plat.**, etc.

2. [select] *to be acquiesced in* (as the least in a choice of evils), ἀγαπητόν [ἐστι] *one must be content*, εἰ., ἐάν.,
id=Plat., Xen., etc.

III. [select] adv. -τῶς, *cheerfully, contentedly*, **Plat., Dem.**,
etc.

2. [select] *just enough to content one, only just, barely,*
scarcely Plat