

Welcome Al-Haakim!

Post by "Cassius" of January 12, 2025 at 5:18 AM

Welcome [Al-Hakiim von Grof](#)

There is one last step to complete your registration:

All new registrants must post a response to this message here in this welcome thread (we do this in order to minimize spam registrations).

You must post your response within 72 hours, or your account will be subject to deletion.

Please say "Hello" by introducing yourself, tell us what prompted your interest in Epicureanism and which particular aspects of Epicureanism most interest you, and/or post a question.

This forum 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 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.

Please check out our [Getting Started](#) page.

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.

["Epicurus and His Philosophy"](#) by Norman DeWitt

[The Biography of Epicurus by Diogenes Laertius](#). This includes the surviving letters of Epicurus, including those to [Herodotus](#), [Pythocles](#), and [Menoceus](#).

["On The Nature of Things"](#) - by Lucretius (a poetic abridgement of Epicurus' "On Nature"

["Epicurus on Pleasure"](#) - By Boris [Nikolsky](#)

The chapters on Epicurus in [Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks On Pleasure."](#)

[Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section](#)

[Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section](#)

The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda - [Martin Ferguson Smith translation](#)

[A Few Days In Athens" - Frances Wright](#)

Lucian Core Texts on Epicurus: (1) [Alexander the Oracle-Monger](#), (2) [Hermodotus](#)

[Philodemus "On Methods of Inference"](#) (De Lacy version, including his appendix on relationship of Epicurean canon to Aristotle and other Greeks)

"The Greeks on Pleasure" -Gosling & Taylor Sections on Epicurus, especially the [section on katastematic and kinetic pleasure](#) which explains why ultimately this distinction was not of great significance to Epicurus.

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. Feel free to join in on one or more of our conversation threads under various topics found throughout the forum, where you can to ask questions or to add in any of your insights as you study the Epicurean philosophy.

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.

(If you have any questions regarding the usage of the forum or finding info, please post any questions in this thread).

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.

**Nothing can be created
from nothing.**

**Nature has no gods over
her.**

**Do not assign to the
gods anything that is
inconsistent with
incorruption and
blessedness.**

Death is nothing to us.

**There is no necessity to
live under the control of
necessity.**



**He who says “Nothing
can be known” knows
nothing.**

All sensations are “true.”

**Virtue is not absolute or
an end in itself - all good
and evil consists in
sensation.**

**Pleasure is the guide of
life.**

**By “Pleasure” we mean
all experience that is not
painful.**

**Life is desirable, but unlimited time contains no greater
pleasure than limited time.**

Post by “Al-Hakiim von Grof” of January 12, 2025 at 11:32 PM

For no reason at all, throughout my entire journey of religious conversion, deconstruction, and philosophical inquiry, I had never given Epicureanism any thought or investigation until just a couple days ago. A combination of happenstance and sudden curiosity (the source of which I can't recall) led me to this website, and what a boon it's been. This weekend has been spent with every spare second consuming the treasure trove of posts, articles, conversations, and texts housed and linked here. It's as if the authors of the Epicurean works reached through time and accessed my inner-self to put into words - more succinctly and comprehensively than I ever could have - the views and ideas I've taken such a long and circuitous journey to formulate for

myself.

I'd like to thank everyone who's contributed to this website, and acknowledge all the work that has gone into compiling and synthesizing what seems to be the whole of Classical Epicureanism. Such work is priceless.

A recent discovery (stumbled upon on this website, of course) that I've found quite intriguing is that Thomas Jefferson proclaimed himself an Epicurean. This led me down a brief rabbit hole where evidence of this was presented through a number of his personal writings. Given this knowledge, one can't help but notice the not-insignificant influence Epicurean philosophy has had on the formation of The United States, or at the very least some of its founding documents, like the Declaration:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

The emphasized portions seem to me most obviously influenced by Jefferson's Epicurean worldview:

- Equality among men (we're all made from the same stuff, trying to live a life of pleasure, making friends or at least not making enemies)
- life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness/pleasure (obvious principles of Epicurean philosophy from my very limited understanding. Life is good, we seek freedom from the violence and oppression of evil men as it's deeply unpleasant, pursuing pleasure is self explanatory as its kind of the whole point)
- the purpose of government, at its core, being the promotion of mutual peace between men to allow the freedom to pursue a life of pleasure. Perhaps even an extension or a development off of PD6?

While parts of the Declaration are not Epicurean, and other parts may even be contradictory depending on one's reading of the text, the influence of Epicureanism is evident.

Let me know what you think.

Post by “Martin” of January 13, 2025 at 3:40 AM

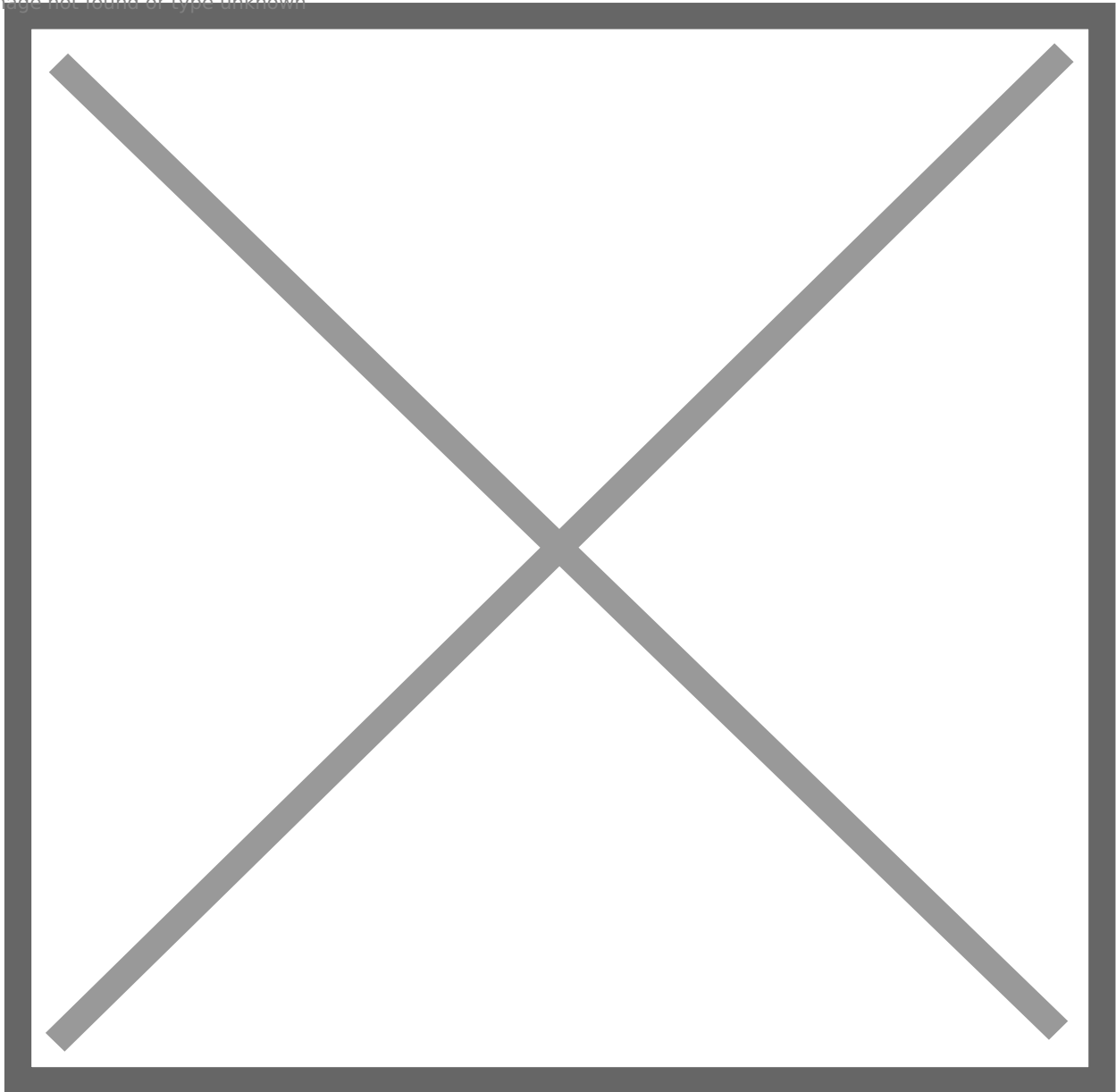
Welcome Al-Hakiim!

Post by “Don” of January 13, 2025 at 7:16 AM

Welcome aboard, [Al-Hakiim von Grof](#) !

You've hit on a fascinating topic. It seems undeniable to me that Jefferson's Epicurean leanings influenced his political thought. However, the final draft of the Declaration went through a committee as well as revisions from the whole Congress before being accepted. A large part of Jefferson's original draft remained intact through the process, but there were significant changes made nonetheless. Here's a history of the creation of the Declaration from the US National Archives:

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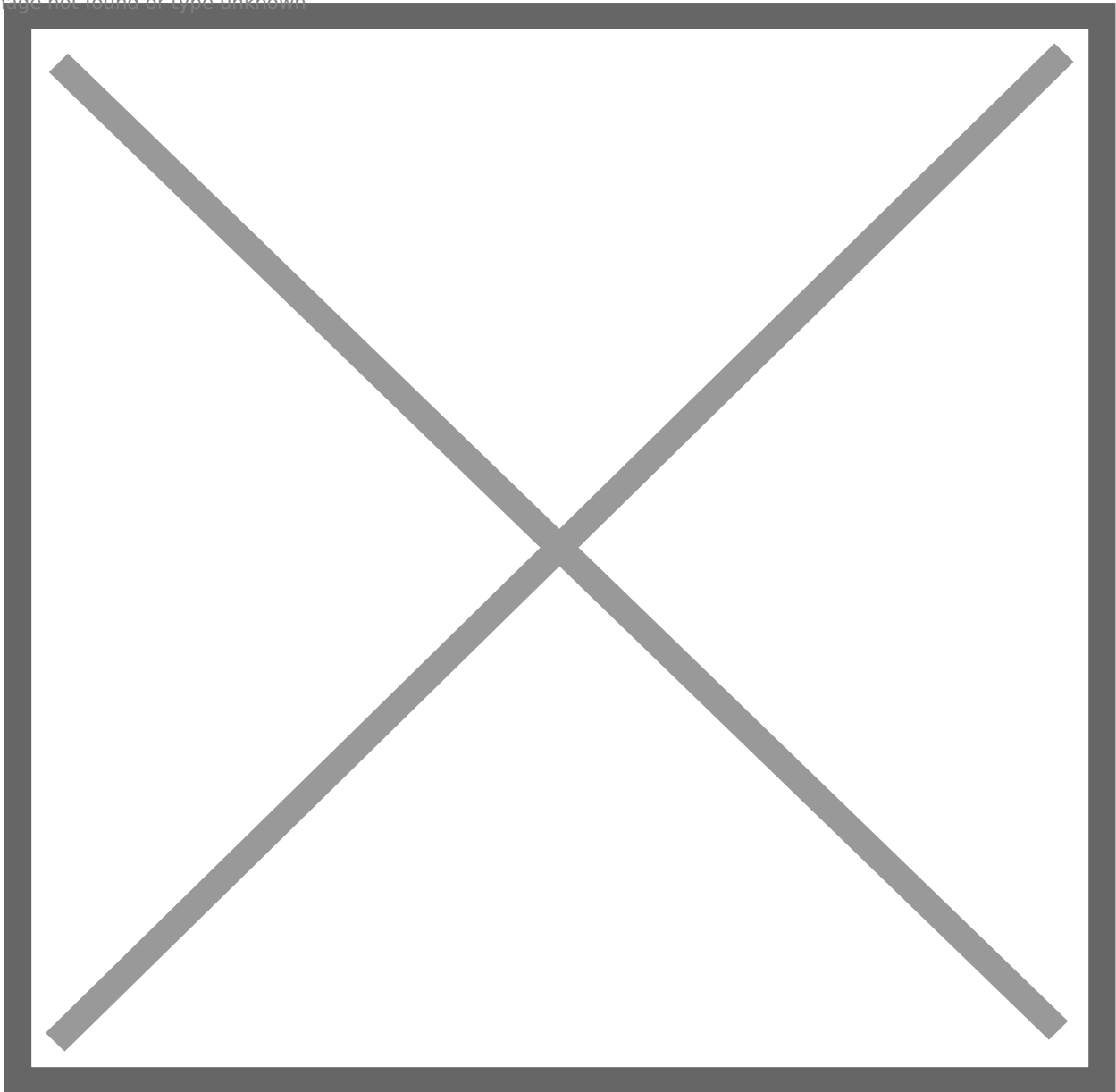
[The Declaration of Independence: A History](#)

Nations come into being in many ways. Military rebellion, civil strife, acts of heroism, acts of treachery, a thousand greater and lesser clashes between...

www.archives.gov

There's also this from Monticello stating that "pursuit of happiness" could have clearly been influenced by George Mason's "Virginia Declaration of Rights"

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[Pursuit of Happiness](#)

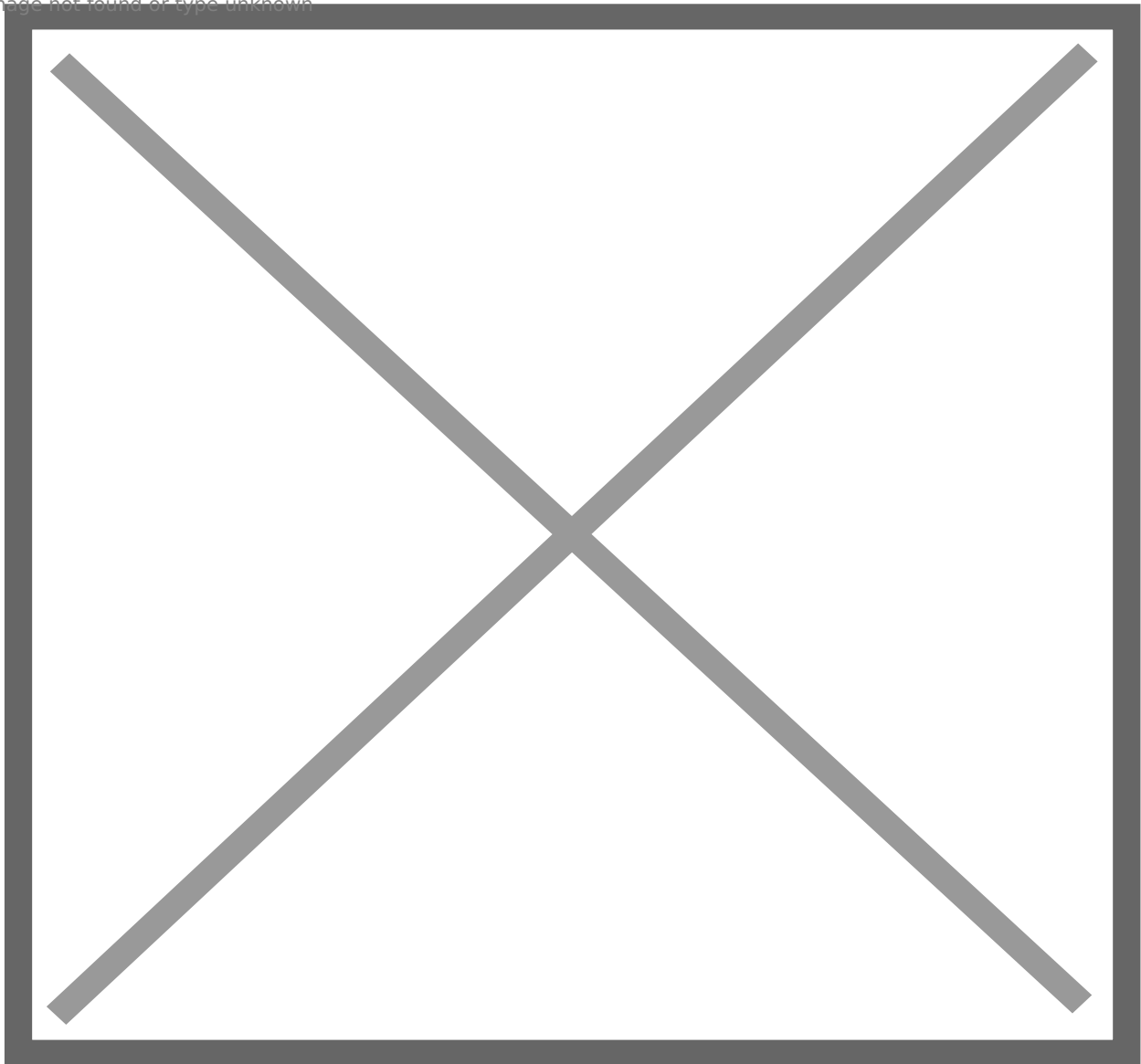
Find out what we know about what Thomas Jefferson meant by "pursuit of happiness".
www.monticello.org

There's also

[Pursuit of Happiness - Creating the Declaration of Independence - Creating the United States | Exhibitions - Library of Congress](#)

Historian Peter Moore appears to have written an entire book on "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness"

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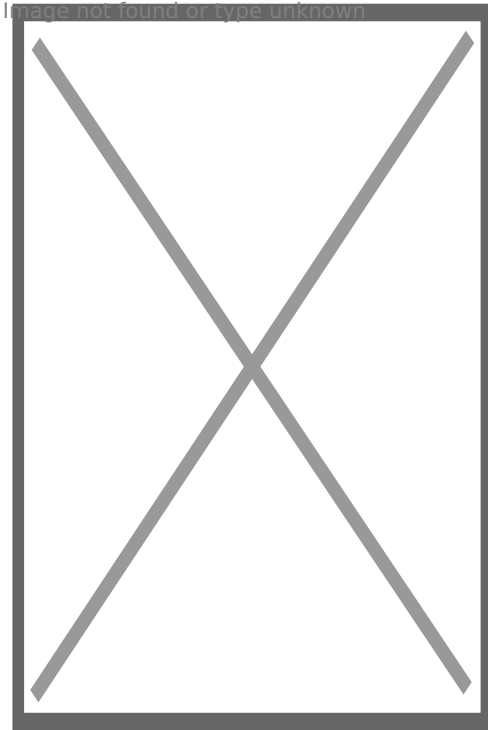


[How Jefferson's 'pursuit of happiness' phrase came to be](#)

Historian Peter Moore examines six Enlightenment thinkers who influenced Thomas Jefferson's drafting of the Declaration of Independence.

www.csmonitor.com

So, Jefferson's phrase doesn't appear to be unique to him or *wholly* a result of his personal Epicureanism, but Epicurus's ideas were percolating throughout the Enlightenment era.



[Epicurus in the Enlightenment](#)

Eighteenth-century Epicureanism is often viewed as radical, anti-religious and politically dangerous. But to what extent does this simplify the ancient...

www.voltaire.ox.ac.uk

Personally, I'm torn on how I feel about Jefferson. He was a fascinating man of science and invention, a pivotal Founder, a heckuva writer, but many of his actions make him difficult to like and from many accounts he was not an inspiring speaker.

That's probably a more lengthy response than you wanted! 😊 I'm glad you found our little Garden here online.

Post by “Cassius” of January 13, 2025 at 7:40 AM

On behalf of all of us who have generated the content over the years, thank you for the kind words about the website Al-Hakiim!

For me finding the Jefferson endorsement of Epicurus was key. I'm not sure what you've seen here at the forum, but be sure you find the full collection of Jefferson material collected [here](#). Hopefully we have all or part of that here, but if not we need to make sure those other letters beyond the Peter Carr "I too am an Epicurean" are easily findable. The letters with John Adams

make it even more plain that Jefferson understood a lot about Epicurus.

So yes the Jefferson connection was a major influence on my own thinking. Now, given the path that you're own, i'd recommend the DeWitt book (for the sweeping scope) followed by the Austin book (for a contemporary appreciation that doesn't follow the modern trend to water down the philosophy).

it may not be an issue for you, but one of the most challenging aspects for most people is getting past a superficial interpretation of the word "pleasure." I would not recommend too much focus on Lucretius or even the core texts until you have read an introductory summary like DeWitt, but for me the most benefit has come from reading Books One and Two of Cicero's On Ends. Definitely don't tackle that until you've read enough introductory material to give you background on the "Pleasure" debate - for example you need to be sure that you are acquainted with the "anti-pleasure" arguments typified by Plato's "[Philebus](#)." DeWitt can provide most of that. But once you get familiar with how Cicero (and the other philosophers) were limiting the term "pleasure" to "sensuality," and how Epicurus saw fit to respond to that by emphasizing that there are only two feelings, and thus all feelings which are not painful come within "pleasure," then you are no longer trapped into thinking that the advocacy of "pleasure" means nothing more than tea parties and dreamy indulgence.

As Dewitt put it on page 240 of "Epicurus And His Philosophy" page 240 (emphasis added):

*"The extension of the name of pleasure to this normal state of being was the major innovation of the new hedonism. It was in the negative form, freedom from pain of body and distress of mind, that it drew the most persistent and vigorous condemnation from adversaries. The contention was that the application of the name of pleasure to this state was unjustified on the ground that two different things were thereby being denominated by one name. Cicero made a great to-do over this argument, but it is really superficial and captious. **The fact that the name of pleasure was not customarily applied to the normal or static state did not alter the fact that the name ought to be applied to it; nor that reason justified the application; nor that human beings would be the happier for so reasoning and believing.***

And getting back to Jefferson, he too has really good advice:

I take the liberty of observing that you are not a true disciple of our master Epicurus, in indulging the indolence to which you say you are yielding. One of his canons, you know, was that "that indulgence which prevents a greater pleasure, or produces a greater pain, is to be avoided." Your love of repose will lead, in its progress, to a suspension of healthy exercise, a relaxation of mind, an indifference to everything around you, and finally to a debility of body, and hebetude of mind, the farthest of all things from the happiness which the well-regulated indulgences of Epicurus ensure; fortitude, you know is one of his four cardinal virtues. That teaches us to meet and surmount difficulties; not to fly from them, like cowards; and to fly, too, in vain, for they will meet and arrest us at every turn of our road. Weigh this matter well; brace

yourself up....

Post by “Cassius” of January 13, 2025 at 7:56 AM

One more comment about the Jefferson connection. i too found it highly motivational to understand Epicurus as an influence on Jefferson and thereby as an influence on the development of American historical thought. But the significance by no means stops there. At some point you'll want to consider Nietzsche's interpretations of Epicurus (not all of which are consistent, unfortunately) and especially consider what Nietzsche had to say in his "Antichrist" about the influence of Epicurus and Lucretius on the entire Western world, rather than just on America. Jefferson reserved much of his appreciation for Epicurus for his private letters, but Nietzsche referenced Epicurus in public and in very challenging terms.

[Quote from Nietzsche' Antichrist](#)

The sneakishness of hypocrisy, the secrecy of the conventicle, concepts as black as hell, such as the sacrifice of the innocent, the unio mystica in the drinking of blood, above all, the slowly rekindled fire of revenge, of Chandala revenge—all that sort of thing became master of Rome: the same kind of religion which, in a pre-existent form, Epicurus had combatted. One has but to read Lucretius to know what Epicurus made war upon—not paganism, but "Christianity", which is to say, the corruption of souls by means of the concepts of guilt, punishment and immortality.—He combatted the subterranean cults, the whole of latent Christianity—to deny immortality was already a form of genuine salvation.—Epicurus had triumphed, and every respectable intellect in Rome was Epicurean—*when Paul appeared...* Paul, the Chandala hatred of Rome, of "the world", in the flesh....

Also for another far-reaching publicly-stated interpretation of Epicurus that has a Jefferson connection, be sure to read his friend's Frances Wright's "[A Few Days In Athens](#)." That's another highly interesting book that I myself might never have found without our Epicurean networking on the internet.

Post by “Don” of January 13, 2025 at 8:09 AM

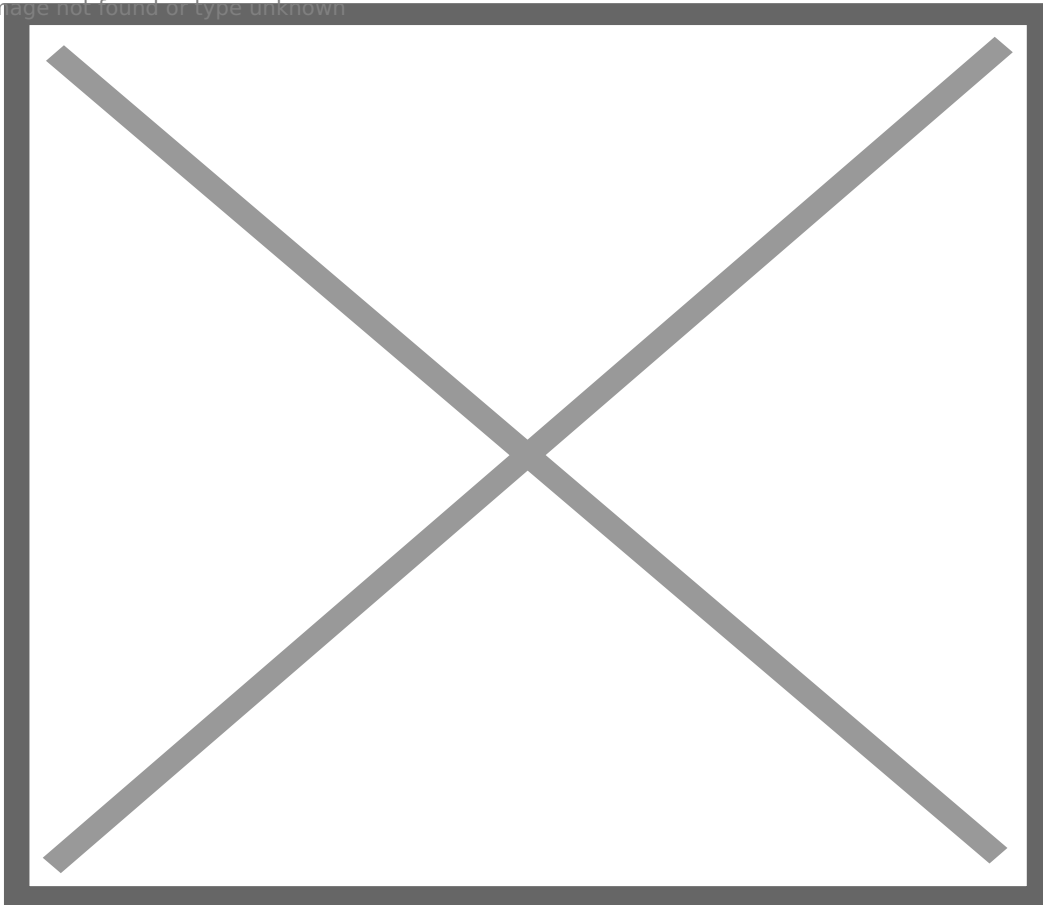
LOL [Al-Hakiim von Grof](#) , you didn't expect so much homework, did you? 😊

Seriously though, just feel free to dig in as deeply and as quickly as you find pleasurable! There's a welcoming group of people here to bounce ideas off of, to ask questions of, and to explore the philosophy with.

Post by “Cassius” of January 13, 2025 at 11:39 AM

Thanks to your motivation posts, Al-Hakiim, I've set up a page here and copied over the resources from NewEpicurean. Hopefully they will be easier to use here:

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[Thomas Jefferson Resources - Epicureanfriends.com](http://www.epicureanfriends.com)

www.epicureanfriends.com

Post by “Al-Hakiim von Grof” of January 13, 2025 at 9:14 PM

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4219-welcome-al-haakim/>

Thanks for all the reading suggestions. I've begun DeWitt's book and I'll refer to this thread for my next read.

The Jefferson topic is one I'm eager to dive into, especially once I understand the philosophy more and truly appreciate the connection.

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2025 at 2:13 AM

Al Hakiim please comment when you can while reading and that will help us expand our Jefferson subsection. There's a great deal of explicitly philosophical material in those letters that deserve discussion.

In addition to the letters with Adams there is a lot of interesting commentary in the "Head and Heart" letter as well, in which I think he gives the "heart" - rather than rationalism - the better part of the argument.

I also found Jefferson's connection to "Thomas Cooper MD" very useful, given Cooper's explicit materialism. See thomascoopermd.com And there are all sorts of other figures of that period from Thomas Paine to Elihu Palmer and details of "deism" that have at least significant Epicurean overtones. Not to mention the explicitly Epicurean "A Few Days In Athens," which Jefferson endorsed, and of which I am sure there is much more to the story than a one-off writing project by Frances Wright.

There's a lot more connection to Epicurus in that period than we've been led to believe.

Post by "Don" of January 14, 2025 at 5:34 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

There's a lot more connection to Epicurus in that period than we've been led to believe.

The French Enlightenment thinkers and earlier French writers are also a fascinating piece of that history, as [Charles](#) has pointed out in the past, including LaMettrie, Voltaire, Gassendi, et al.