

Does Epicurean Philosophy Remove the Magic and Mystery of Life?

Post by "Cassius" of April 26, 2026 at 4:22 PM

Does Epicurean Philosophy Remove the Magic and Mystery of Life?

No -- and the accusation rests on a confusion between two very different sources of wonder. Epicurean philosophy removes *superstition* and *fear-based awe* -- the kind that sees lightning as divine punishment, or that requires belief in an intervening deity to feel reverence for existence. What it does not remove, and actively encourages, is the genuine astonishment and delight that come from seeing the natural world clearly.

Lucretius addresses this directly in Book Two of *De Rerum Natura*, in a passage that illustrates why understanding nature deepens rather than diminishes wonder. In the Humphries translation:

Quote

"Direct your mind To a true system. Here is something new For ear and eye. Nothing is ever so easy But what, at first, it is difficult to trust. Nothing is great and marvelous, but what All men, a little at a time, begin To mitigate their sense of awe. Look up, Look up at the pure bright color of the sky, The wheeling stars, the moon, the shining sun! If all these, all of a sudden, should arise For the first time before our mortal sight, What could be called more wonderful, more beyond The heights to which aspiring mind might dare? Nothing, I think. And yet, a sight like this, Marvelous as it is, now draws no man To lift his gaze to heaven's bright areas. We are a jaded lot. But even so Don't be too shocked by something new, too scared To use your reasoning sense, to weigh and balance, So that if in the end a thing seems true, You welcome it with open arms; if false, You do your very best to strike it down." -- Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, Book II (Humphries translation)

Lucretius's point is that *familiarity*, not Epicurean philosophy, is the thief of wonder. The heavens are astonishing -- the problem is that most people have grown too accustomed to them to feel it. Epicurean philosophy does not suppress this awe; it recovers and deepens it by teaching us to see what we have stopped noticing. The prescription is not less engagement with the world but more attentive and honest engagement with it.

This connects directly to one of the less well-known teachings about the Epicurean wise man. Diogenes Laertius records (DL 10.117-118) that the Epicurean sage, far from being emotionally

flattened by philosophical understanding, is capable of feeling pleasure and gratitude more intensely than those who have not examined their lives. The wise man, freed from the anxieties of superstition and the constant background fear of death that dull others' experience, is more fully present to the actual goods life offers -- and thus more genuinely and deeply moved by them.

A related point concerns the Epicurean attitude toward poetry. Epicurus's caution about certain poets -- Homer in particular -- is sometimes misread as hostility to the pleasures of literature, or as a general suspicion of imagination, beauty, and emotional engagement with art. This is wrong. The specific Epicurean objection to Homeric poetry was not that it gave pleasure, but that it gave *false representations of the gods*: portraying them as quarreling, vengeful, lustful, and arbitrary -- exactly the kind of divine beings whose existence would justify the fear and servitude that Epicurus spent his career working to dissolve. It was the theological *content*, not the aesthetic *experience*, that Epicurus found damaging. Poetry that does not distort the nature of the divine, or that makes no theological claims at all, falls entirely outside that objection.

In short: Epicurean philosophy does not drain the color from life. It removes the particular fears and confusions that prevent people from seeing and feeling what is actually there. The wonder available to someone who grasps that the cosmos is vast, natural, eternal, and without supernatural masters -- and who meets that cosmos with gratitude for the pleasures of friendship, beauty, conversation, and the sheer fact of being alive -- is, if anything, richer and more firmly grounded than the wonder of someone whose sense of awe is mediated by fear of invisible powers.

Post by “Cassius” of April 26, 2026 at 4:22 PM

This was added today prompted by a discussion in a Sunday Zoom.

Post by “Matteng” of April 27, 2026 at 6:04 PM

Coming from a religious worldview I dismissed the materialistic worldview because I thought and was taught how disenchanting it is and it would empty life of meaning and wonder. After finding flaws in my first religion I searched for the „right“ one.

At last I dismissed them all because they rely on an idealist worldview and Epicurean Philosophy taught me how liberating and even wonderful and positive a Materialistic/

Epicurean worldview is.

Post by “Cassius” of April 27, 2026 at 8:00 PM

That is the key Matteng. And this is why it is so important to dismiss the idea that "the tranquillity" is the Epicurean goal. The wise man feels his emotions MORE deeply than others , and there are only two feelings, pleasure and pain. Life is about deeply feeling pleasure. Tranquility is one pleasure, but there are many many others that make like worthwhile. There may be some people whose goal in life is to say "I am calm" but that is a natural Stoic who drains life of the majority of its pleasures and thereby misses the whole point of living.

Post by “kochiekoch” of April 27, 2026 at 9:06 PM

Does a scientific and materialist worldview diminish awe and wonder? I would say no.

Years ago, when I was riding bicycle for transportation, I got caught in a thunderstorm. I quick ducked into a bus shelter with transparent plexiglass walls and top; so, I got to see the whole storm from my protective refuge. AWESOME and unforgettable! ☐☐ The fact that I know it's only electrical discharges in nature did nothing to diminish it. LOL!!! In fact, it helped! I knew I wasn't being targeted by Yahweh or Zeus for being a nasty atheist! ☐☐

[Quote from Cassius](#)

No -- and the accusation rests on a confusion between two very different sources of wonder. Epicurean philosophy removes superstition and fear-based awe -- the kind that sees lightning as divine punishment, or that requires belief in an intervening deity to feel reverence for existence.

Yep.

Post by “Eikadistes” of April 28, 2026 at 1:41 AM

Imagine being more impressed by psychics than physics. 😜

Post by “Don” of April 28, 2026 at 7:04 AM

Saw this in my morning scrolling and it seemed appropriate for here:

In case you forgot:

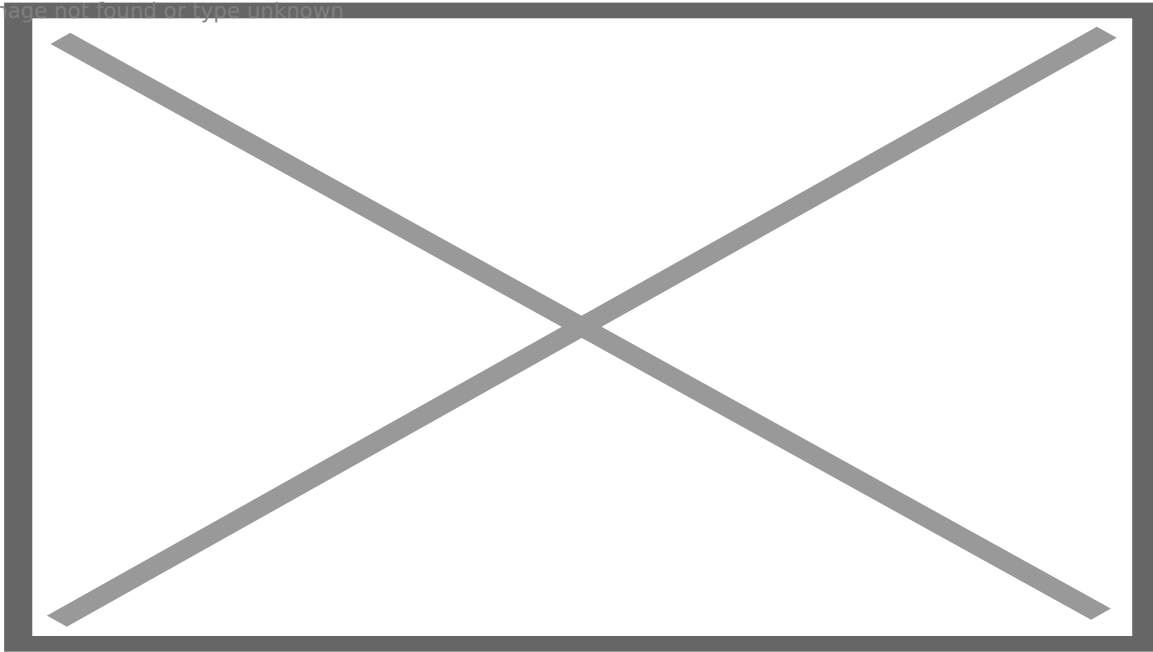
We live on a planet where whales sing songs that travel for miles. Where trees can recognize their own offspring and protect them underground. Where dolphins give each other names and where lightning can create glass in the sand. Where horses can read human emotions. Where rain has a smell before it even arrives and where the ocean can glow in the dark. A planet where the stars we see might not even exist anymore.

Post by “Don” of April 28, 2026 at 7:18 AM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

Imagine being more impressed by psychics than physics. 😜

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I've seen numerous commercials for these charlatans on TV, and it makes me cringe and laugh every time.

Quote

When you connect with one of our psychics you are speaking - or chatting - with someone that has been tested and proven to possess the highest qualities in their field.

...

Over the years we've developed a rigorous system for choosing, evaluating, and cultivating psychic excellence so that each advisor brings unmatched accuracy, experience and skill to your readings.

....

Our gifted psychics undergo constant reevaluation. They need to maintain a high level of performance and consistent demonstration of psychic abilities to remain an advisor with California Psychics.

□□□□ Egads. The TV commercials tout that their "psychics" have been "vetted." By Zeus, where's The Amazing Randi when you need him?! 😄

Post by “Patrikos” of April 30, 2026 at 3:26 PM

[Quote from kochiekoch](#)

Years ago, when I was riding bicycle for transportation, I got caught in a thunderstorm. I quick ducked into a bus shelter with transparent plexiglass walls and top; so, I got to see the whole storm from my protective refuge. AWESOME and unforgettable! ☐☐

[kochiekoch](#)

Thanks for sharing your unanticipated experience in nature. I have discovered a way to experience being in nature’s storms (up to 20 mph), by using a [WeatherPod](#).

I have a smaller one that I can put up on my balcony in a couple minutes. During winter months and rainy days, it is a great way to stay outside, and in touch with nature. This way, in most weather, I can experience **“the genuine astonishment and delight that come from seeing the natural world clearly”**.