Epicurean Week Development Project

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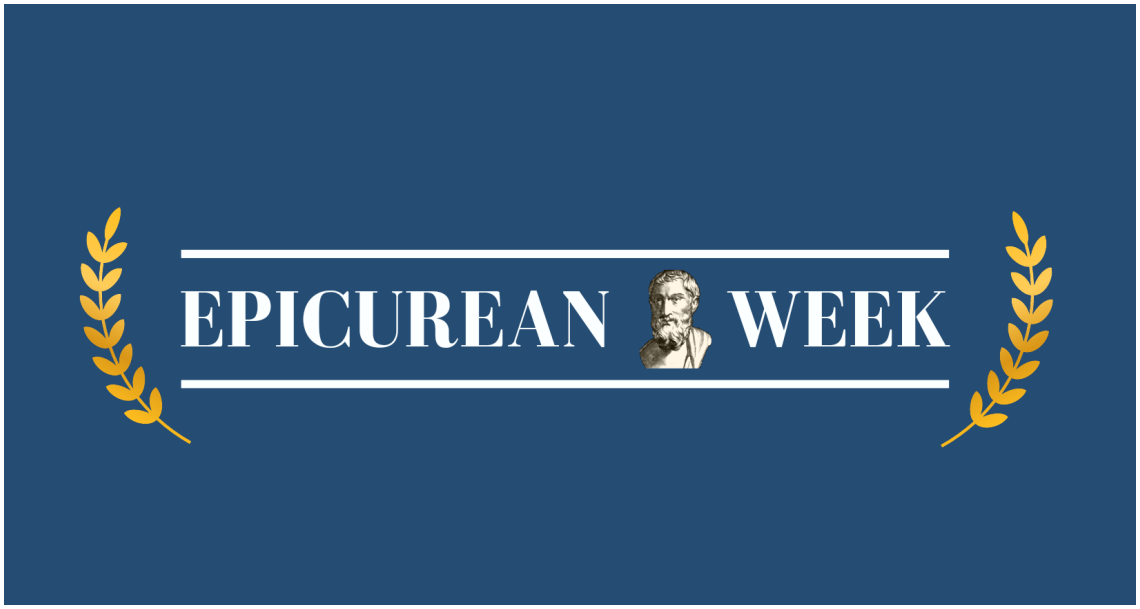
This page is currently a work-in-progress for an "Epicurean Week" college level guided program to be used in an introductory philosophy course. The program will last for seven days and students will choose exercises to enhance their understanding of Epicurean philosphy. These are "modern" exercises based upon the core teachings of the Epicurean philosophy and the extant texts..

This is a collection of proposals created by several individuals. Several members of the EpicureanFriends forum have been granted editing privilages so that we can collaboratively create this material.

**Note to those who have been granted editing permission: please either create your own section in which you present your own individual proposal -- or -- if you add to anyone else's existing proposal please note any changes by placing those changes inside brackets and adding your name and the date of the change -- [idea..., name, date]. Also if you think something should be removed please do not delete anything but instead use brackets and write that as an editing note, with your name, and date. [editing note..., name, date].



For the Current Version of a website dedicated to this project click here:

EpicureanWeek
Orientation And Practice In Epicurean Philosophy
wiki.epicureanworldview.com

1. Proposal 1: by Cassius (Currently under development)

Daily Emphasis:

1.1. Day 1: Contemplate Why Epicurus Held That Pleasure is the Beginning and End of the Happy Life

1. There are no supernatural gods - The Universe is entirely natural and operates on natural principles deriving from the nature of the atoms and void. It is not the view that the universe is natural that is the problem - the problem is "super-naturalism" - the idea promoted by supernatural religion and Platonic idealism that there is a "true world" beyond this one - that is the source of great evil.
2. There Is No Life After Death - Therefore you only live once
3. All Good and Evil Consists In Sensation - Epicurus's liberation of humanity comes largely through his focus on this world as the only reality and the reasoned use of the senses as our tools for navigating it.
4. Pleasure is The Beginning And End of the Blessed Life - Recognize Venus (Pleasure) as the Source of all that is desirable and motivational.

1.2. Day 2: Prudence in Pursuit of Pleasure is the Path to Happiness

1. Recognize that wisdom brings great pleasure, including that of appreciating the dangers from which wisdom protects you.
2. Recognize that Nature has established that neither our bodies nor our minds require great wealth or power over others
3. Recognize that Wealth, power, and the like are no guarantee of happiness - only reason has power over the fear of death and other irrational fears
4. Recognize that only through the reasoned study of Nature can we cure our fears and anxieties

1.3. Day 3: You Only Live Once So Seize the Day and Be Confident that Your Troubles Are Limited

1. Recognize that the fear of hell is dispelled by the study of nature.
2. Mind is a part of man's makeup just like hands, feet, and eyes.
3. Mind and spirit are, like everything else, material in nature.
4. Prudence in choosing and avoiding our actions in life can dispel many of the harmful elements of our nature and allow us to live lives worthy of the gods.
5. Mind and body are born and age together.
6. Mind perishes with the body.
7. We only have one life to live.
8. Death is a state of nothingness to us.
9. There are many ways to think about death to help us realize that the end of life is not a matter for despair.

1.4. Day 4: The Senses Are Your Ultimate Test of Truth In Navigating Life

1. Illusions do not show that eyesight is fallible; it is the task of reason to process the information they provide.
2. There are many examples of visual illusions, but we fool ourselves; misjudgments are not the fault of the senses but of our processing the information the senses provide
3. The man who argues that nothing can be known confesses that he himself is ignorant.
4. The ultimate validity of the senses cannot be refuted, because any attempted refutation depends for its proof on the senses.
5. If you cannot explain a seeming contradiction, it is better to accept an incorrect theory than to give up those conclusions that you have already had sufficient facts to verify to be true.
6. Some events in life - like Romantic Love - are intoxicating, and in order to avoid undue pain you must avoid - not the event itself - but the intoxication.

1.5. Day 5: Life on Earth - And Elsewhere - Proceeds Naturally in Ways We Can Understand

1. If the reason is unpurified, we wage an internal war against ourselves.
2. All the world is mortal too, and just as it once came together into its present form, it will one day pass away.
3. Wonderment at the stars in heaven breeds confusion, as fools think that the stars are moved by the gods, and this leads them to invoke a bitter lordship of religion over themselves.
4. Everything that has a body does not have a mind – the element of mind and spirit exists only in connection with living animals.
5. The gods did not change their immortal ways to create the world for men.
6. The gods did not live in darkness and grief before they created the world.

1.6. Day 6: In the End All Things Must Die - But That is Motivational, Not Depressing

1. Civilization first flowered in Athens, and Athens brought to us a man – Epicurus - who discovered and brought to us the complete truth, and as a result his glory makes him seem to us almost divine
2. Epicurus diagnosed the problem that corrupts men's lives, and cleansed our hearts by words of truth, showing us (1) the error of greeds and fears, (2) the highest good that Nature has ordained for men, (3) the natural evils that confront the lives of men, and that they can be defeated once we learn the proper way to deal with them, and (4) that most of the anxieties we face are imaginary, no worse than the imaginings of children.
3. Even those who otherwise understand the laws of Nature may wonder how certain things can happen, especially in the sky, and this wonder leads to confusion and to regress to superstitious religious awe
4. Stop having thoughts unworthy of the gods, because this will harm you – not because the gods will care, but because you will fear that you are at the mercy of the gods and this will cause you great

anxiety.
5. The lesson of the plague of Athens is that bad things do happen, and we must use them to remind us that life is short, it is up to us to live it, and that Nature gives us pleasure and pain as guides to life so we can use the time we have as best as we can.

1.7. Day 7: Recap of the Epicurean Worldview

2. Proposal 2: "Modern" Exercises by Kalosyni - (Currently under development)

A. Pleasure, Desire, and Choices and Avoidances

1. Write out a list of things that bring you physical pleasure and which are experienced through sight, sound, taste, touch, smell. Include as much detail as possible in your desciption of each item.
2. Proprioception, otherwise known as kinesthesia, is your body's ability to sense movement, action, and location. It's present in every muscle movement you have. This is also a source of pleasure, as in dancing. Do you currently enjoy some type of physical activity? (add it to your list above). If not, is there something you might like to try?
3. On your list of physical pleasures, put a star next to the ones that are your favorites. Put a question mark next to the ones that bring both pleasure and pain at the same time. On the ones which have a question mark ask yourself if the pain that comes also leads to a bad outcome or a much worse pain in the future or if the pain increases your future pleasure or your future well being.
4. Think about what the word pleasure means to you, and how and when you use that word. Do you feel guilt or embarassment about pleasurable experiences? Why might this be so? Journal your thoughts.
5. Write out a list of things that bring you mental pleasure -- thinking, reading, learning, memories, imagination, contemplation, discussion, etc. Include as much detail as possible in your desciption of each item.
6. Put a star next to the ones which are your favorite mental pleasures. Put a question mark next to the ones that bring both pleasure and pain at the same time. On the ones which have a question mark ask yourself if the pain that comes also leads to a bad outcome or a much worse pain in the future or if the pain increases your future pleasure or your future well being.
7. The enjoyment of pleasurable memories: Start a journal to record good things that happen each day (to assist in recalling past pleasures).
8. Take a "pleasure walk": Choose a busy city area or a quiet nature area (or do both). Pay attention to things which draw your eyes while looking for pleasing elements. Listen for pleasing sounds. Notice if there are pleasing smells or aromas or things you can touch which have pleasing textures.

B. Friendship

1. Think about why friendship important to living a pleasurable life.
2. Do you have (or have had) a friendship that made you feel happy? If so, write about why your friendship brought happiness to you. If you have found past friendship to be painful or difficult, first write about what was difficult, and then imagine specifically what would need to be different so that it would contribute to happiness instead. Write out your insights into a story imagining a future friendship with a new friend who brings you happiness.
3. Make a list of your family members, your friends, and your acquaintances. Then write about the good things that result from those interactions. Can you trust them to help you out in an emergency?
4. Remember a past time when you helped out a friend or a family member during a difficult time. Did it help make the relationship stronger? If not, think about why and what would have needed to be different.
5. Think about and then write out ways to make new friends or ways to improve your current friendships.

C. Reducing Fears of Death and Pain

1. Visit a local cemetery and read the inscriptions on the tombstones as a way of reflecting on the shortness of life and that you too will one day be gone forever.
2. How does it feel to you when you think about there being a limited amount of time in which you can experience, think, and feel?
3. Pains are short when strong, and lesser pains that last longer
   do not prevent pleasure from being experienced. The next time you experience pain in your body, during illness or something like accidentally stubbing your toe, have this ready for contemplation.
4. Pain is a like a warning light to the body, and yet some pain now can lead to greater pleasure and benefit in the future. When is it worth it to endure pain in your body during exercise or for some future benefit?
5. How does pain detract from the feeling of pleasure? Write about the times when you experienced this happening to you.
6. Is mental pain different than physical pain?

D. Knowledge of the natural world: its materialist and non-supernatural essence, and the nature of God's non-involvement

1. Study the nature of various phenomenon so that you can make prudent choices. What is lightening and how do you stay safe if you are caught outside in a thunderstorm? What are ticks and how do you prevent tick bites? Or river safety when rafting. Chose something that reflects a personal interest or is specific to where you live.

** References:

1. "Every friendship is an excellence in itself, even though it begins in mutual advantage." VS23
2. "Friendship dances around the world, announcing to each of us that we must awaken to happiness." VS52
3. "Of all the things that wisdom provides for the complete happiness of one's entire life, by far the greatest is friendship". PD27

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Proposal 3: by: _____

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Proposal 4: by: _____

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