

# Welcome Cleveland Oakie!

Post by "Cassius" of October 21, 2021 at 3:51 PM

Very good comments from Joshua and Godfrey. I think I agree with all of them so I won't repeat that part in what I write:

1. I'm most of the way through DeWitt's book, and in Chapter 14 he writes of Epicurus, "He favored a minimum of government and chose to look upon men as free individuals in a society transcending local political boundaries." Is this an eccentric opinion of DeWitt's, or would most experts on Epicurus describe him as a kind of libertarian or classical liberal? It is interesting to me that my current intense interest in Epicureanism was spurred by Bryan Caplan's recommendation that everyone read the "Letter to Menoeceus." (Caplan is a libertarian blogger, college professor and author. Many of his views are decidedly Epicurean, i.e. he stresses the importance of friendship.)

Response One: Again I agree with Godfrey and Joshua and think that (1) it is hard to apply the systems Epicurus was involved in to modern systems. And (2) I think ultimately we have to look to Epicurus' position on Justice to see that he was very flexible and I think he would say that the system of government that is most appropriate depends on the facts. But I also do think that it is fair to infer that as for Epicurus himself and his friends, they who were often simple in their tastes, self-sufficient, etc. would naturally be attracted to themselves live under a system that reflected those simple and "live and let live tastes." So I think it's understandable how "libertarians" today can see commonalities in their views with those of Epicurus, but they shouldn't take it too far. Epicurus was above all practical, and interested in the results in action, and he would not likely say "Everyone in the world ought to live as me and my friends in Athens in 300 BC preferred to live." So in thinking that Epicurus endorsed their political viewpoints, I think they would be in error, just as would be almost everyone who tries to enlist Epicurus for their applied political viewpoints.

2. Now that I know more about Epicureanism, thanks to DeWitt's book, I have to say that the Epicurean position that puzzles me the most is the denunciation of mathematics. Is there a ancient Greek cultural context here that I'm not getting?

Response 2: Be sure to see the material in our recent thread on Epicurus and Propositional Logic: [Propositional Logic, Truth Tables, and Epicurus' Objection to "Dialectic"](#) And also these threads: [Explaining Epicurus' Position On The "Size of the Sun" And Related Issues of Speculative Math / Geometry](#) The basic point is that "science" is very similar to "wisdom" in virtue- no "system" is fully accurate to the facts of reality, and those limitations must always be remembered. The same goes especially for mathematics, which allows us to create "models"

but not duplicate reality. People who forget those limitations lose themselves in pursuit of ideal forms which do not exist in reality.

3. About sex, same question. Is Epicurus negative toward sex because he opposed older men hitting on young boys, or is there something else at work here? I don't see how, for example, married sex would contradict Epicurean principles.

Response 3: I think it is most accurate to say that Epicurus cautioned that care be used in sex just as he would or did in terms of alcohol or any other high-risk activities that tend toward intoxication. Intoxication makes it difficult for us to be honest in predicting the results of our actions - in answering the question "What will happen to me if I choose this course of action?" Epicurus warned against the pain that comes from intoxicated pursuit of sex / romance but he did not condemn the pleasure itself, and he recognized sex for one of the real hallmark experiences of life by which we know ultimately what pleasure is. "The pleasure of sex" is a feeling that is hard to fail to feel and understand, so I think the best way to appreciate Epicurus on this is that he is always reminding us that all pleasures are desirable, but some bring the danger of more pain than others do, and the fact of life is that this is a pleasure to handle with great care.

4. I didn't really get an answer to my query about Hiram Crespo's book, but related to that, I was browsing on Kindle the other night and I ran across Cassius' "Elemental Epicureanism" and bought it for 99 cents. At that price, and with its collection of basic texts, it ought to be recommended to every new person joining this website. I'll note that an "H. Crespo" recommended it and gave it five stars.

Response 4: My "books" are little more than compilations and the only reason there is a charge for any of them is that I couldn't figure out way to get them on Kindle without there being a charge. If you get any benefit from them I will be glad but they all need dramatic revision - which I hope to do someday. As to Hiram's book that is a complicated subject. A significant number of people find that it contains helpful suggests for the pursuit of pleasure, but it was not written as a basic textbook (such as the DeWitt book) and it should not be depended upon for basic theory. The people who like it the most are generally those who read it first, and before they read DeWitt or some other book on theory. Those who read DeWitt or other reliable theory generally I find to be less well disposed toward it. Anyone who is interested in reading about the differences between Hiram's approach and those of most of us at this forum would do well to read this thread: [Discussion of the Society of Epicurus' 20 Tenets of 12/21/19](#)

If I missed something let me know and I will come back to it!