

Crespo (Hiram) - "Tending the Epicurean Garden"

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2022 at 2:58 PM

It was called to my attention today that we don't have much here in terms of reviews of Hiram's book. We really ought to add more commentary in this thread, since a lot of people come into contact with it.

I have a lot I could say about this book but let me be brief for the moment. Hiram put a lot of work into this and into his other work, and there's a lot to be gained from reading it. However it is important to keep in mind what this book is not:

1. It is not a full and complete introduction to Epicurean philosophy. For that, I strongly recommend DeWitt's "Epicurus and His Philosophy."
2. It is not a detailed commentary on some particular aspect of Epicurean philosophy. For that, you will want to consult one of the many academic articles you can find searching JSTOR or Academia.com.
3. It is not a "compare and contrast" book that explores in detail the differences and similarities between Epicurus and competing philosophies and doctrines. Hiram covers a number of traditions that he feels to be compatible with Epicurean philosophy, and he makes recommendations on how someone might want to consider pursuing them. But it's not a deep discussion of the merits or demerits of other approaches and whether they are ultimately logically consistent with Epicurus.

Hiram's book is in my view much more of a "self-help" book that people who are somewhat familiar with a variety of other traditions besides Epicurus may find helpful in their own pursuit of techniques to improve their lives. When read in that way I think Hiram's book is helpful. I have a copy myself and don't mind including it on reading lists for people who are interested in this approach.

But I do want to caution people against thinking that Hiram is giving, or even attempting to give, an exhaustive analysis of the details of Epicurean philosophy and how it compares with competing Greek or non-Greek philosophies. If you approach it looking for that information you may end up being confused about the issues that Hiram chooses to emphasize as against what you read in Lucretius, or in Epicurus' own letters, or in Diogenes Laertius or the other ancient sources.

People who come across this thread are encouraged to post their own thoughts about "Tending the Epicurean Garden" as that will likely be of great use to those who read it. And especially - if you have questions or concerns while reading it - please don't hesitate to post here in this thread and we'll deal with them as they occur to you.

How do my current thoughts compare to what I wrote on another venue seven years ago? I think you'll see some of the same points in an earlier form, but I am more cautious about recommending it today:

Quote

[Cassius Amicus](#) type up Jul 17, 2014 [Cassius Amicus](#)

This is an excellent book focused on how you can apply ancient Epicurean principles to live a happier life in the modern world. Hiram Crespo is the founder of the Society of Epicurus, and this is his first book, explaining his suggestions for living according to the principles of Epicureanism. This is not an academic treatise or a primer on basic Epicurean doctrines, but a practical guide written for general audiences. The book explains Epicurean views in context with similar views from numerous other traditions, and shows how techniques from a variety of sources can be combined to assist in living more pleasurably. The book is well written and well organized, providing essentially a "self-help" approach with lots of specific advice. This is one of the few absolutely pro-Epicurean books to have been written in the last several hundred years. As far as I know, one has to go back to Frances Wright's "A Few Days In Athens" for another book which comes out swinging in its unreserved advocacy of Epicureanism as a lifestyle and as a philosophy. One can read this book without any knowledge at all of the history or doctrine of Epicurus, because the author provides a good measure of both history and teachings in the course of the book. However the reader who is new to Epicureanism would profit from consulting websites such as <http://www.epicurus.info/>, <http://www.epicurus.net/>, and of course Crespo's own <http://www.societyofepicurus.com/> for more background on the specifics of Epicurean ideas. It appears that Crespo's work as an advocate for Epicurean ideas is just getting started, so hopefully there will be more to come from the same author. ([less](#))