

My struggle with Norman DeWitt

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I have been reading the book very slowly and I suddenly realised that if this had been my first introduction to the philosophy of Epicurus, I might have given it a pass to the extent such a counterfactual can be a reliable indicator.

Here are two related issues:

1. A frequent parallel or comparison with Christianity (almost as a bragging right that Epicureanism has arrived at one or other tool or idea ahead of Christianity).
2. The description of Epicurus as quite a despotic figure with a strong will to dominate feeble minded and expand his influence by any means necessary, including missionary work.

We know that historically many thinkers would be best read with the motto: "don't do as I do, do as I say". But with Epicurus this approach won't work, since the very point of the philosophy is its usefulness in the daily life (back to the example of a useless doctor who does not cure).

Any thoughts on this? How do I reconcile the "live and let live" liberalism with the missionary indoctrination? Is this a problematic tangent of NDW or am I missing something?