

# What Epicurus Offers To The Modern World As Of April, 2024?

Post by "Don" of April 26, 2024 at 11:57 AM

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

At the very least one observation that goes along with the discussion is that Epicurus was long dead even when that was written, so he was not around to give orders, nor does there seem to have been a strict passing of "authority."

Well said, [Cassius](#) ! I see the αρχη "authority" as expressed in πειθαρχησομεν as more like "authoritative" in this case, like an "authoritative" research source. Even in *Sic Fac Omnia Tamquam Spectet Epicurus* "Do all things as if Epicurus were watching" the important word is *tamquam* "as if." Epicurus is NOT watching you. Epicurus has ceased to exist. You can read his texts (or at least some of them) and consider his advice as transmitted through his surviving texts. But we can't submit our choices TO Epicurus and have him pass judgement from some seat of authority.

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

I would also see an analogy to seeing Epicurus as "a god" or even a "father figure" as Lucretius discusses -- gods don't intervene to tell us what to do, they serve as examples that we emulate as best we can.

I also really like this observation. Even if Epicurus is seen as a "god" by Lucretius or the subsequent generations studying in the ancient Garden, you have hit the proverbial nail on the head. [Epicurean gods](#) don't interfere, interact, judge, etc. any aspect of human behavior. Another reason I like the "idealist" over the "realist" idea of the [Epicurean gods](#). But I won't digress down that rabbit hole here.

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

At the same time, there is no doubt in my mind that some kind of uniformity of message is necessary if one is to be logically thought of as an Epicurean.

Yes. And to the rest of that paragraph 👍

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

But if being considered an Epicurean means anything, it means some kind of agreement with core doctrines. And if one is running a school or any kind of organization, then it's inherent in the organization that there is going to be some kind of line between what is and what is not acceptable.

And so it's a matter of what the "core doctrines" are. We do a good job of hashing those out on this forum.

I want to add my opinion of one aspect of this discussion...

There is no way to have the Garden be reborn in the modern era. There is no way that any group that calls itself "Epicurean" in the 21st Century CE can be considered *THE Epicurean Garden Reborn*. Not this forum, not other fora, not any Facebook group, not any Discord group, nor any other group of people has any legitimate imprimatur to assign the label of *The REAL Epicureans* to themselves to the exclusion of others. It's the "[no true Scotsman](#)" fallacy, just philosophically applied: "Well, no TRUE Epicurean would do/say XYZ." Other than the ancient, fragmentary texts, there was no Epicurean "apostolic" succession of authoritative scholars throughout history from the death of Epicurus through to our time to which questions of legitimacy can be addressed. And "apostolic succession" doesn't guarantee adherence to the original practices and beliefs of the founder. Look at the multitude of sects calling themselves "Christian"! The best we can do is come together with τὸν ὅμοιον σεαυτῷ "those like ourselves" and discuss how to apply Epicurean philosophy as we have come to understand it to the conduct of our lives.

All that said, I think we can come to an understanding generally how those Epicurean principles are to be applied *in a modern context*, but we will NEVER EVER EVER have something that is exactly like the ancient Garden. Nor would we want to, from my perspective. For one, I hope no one would condone the institution of slavery that was ubiquitous in the ancient world and taken for granted inside and outside the Garden. Yes, Epicurus welcomed enslaved people into the Garden and freed several of his enslaved people in his will: "Of my slaves I manumit Mys, Nicias, Lycon, and I also give Phaedrium her liberty." But note he said "of my slaves" - plural - So there were more than those four. More than likely educated enslaved people were involved in the copying and dissemination of his writings throughout the ancient world. There's [a fascinating recent book on the role of enslaved scribes in the development of Christianity](#). We live in a different culture and society from that in which Epicurus lived and died and what was there cannot be replicated here without some - maybe even a lot - of negotiation with the cultural context in which the texts were written. I don't advocate proof-texting using the ancient writings, i.e., knowing what we want the texts to say and picking and choosing excerpts that support that position; but we have to let the texts say what they say.

And, I'll end with...

- I think there are many applicable teachings of Epicurus that CAN inform the conduct of our lives for the better...otherwise I wouldn't be here after 4+ years!

- I think there are numerous instances of Epicurus's teachings becoming common among modern, scientifically-minded, materialist people.
- I think making a commitment to "act as if Epicurus were watching" and to judge one's actions in light in Epicurus's philosophy can be admirable and helpful to one's practice. (And Epicurean philosophy is a practice... If you're trying to apply it, refine your behavior, choose wisely, etc., etc., you're practicing Epicurean philosophy.)
- I think gathering together with people that have a similar appreciation for and admiration of Epicurean philosophy can be a good thing for one's life.
- I think there is nothing wrong with frank speech and with discussing whether certain behaviors are in-line with Epicurean philosophy... while at the same time avoiding slipping into a simple "No True Epicurean" fallacy. The frank speech - per Philodemus - must always, however, be given in a way respectful of the receiver of that speech and mindful of their position, demeanor, level of understanding, etc.
- I think having discussions on the original meaning and intent of the ancient texts is an important way to understand how to apply those principles. Epicurus doesn't exist. We can't beseech him with prayer as if he's going to give the "final word" on a contentious point. We have to work it out for ourselves.

So that's my position, as of 11:57 AM on April 26, 2024... As Cassius always say, I reserve the right to revise and extend my remarks. 😊