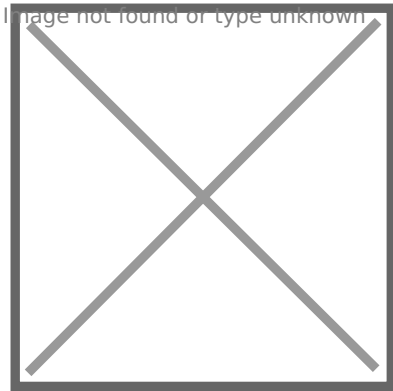


# Caesar The Epicurean? A Matter of Life and Death - Volk 2022

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2025 at 9:36 AM

Here is another article discussing Julius Caesar as potentially Epicurean. I don't yet have a fix on how to compare it to the 1977 article by Frank Bourne, but we have links to both in our "Julius Caesar" subsection of the forum.



## [Caesar the Epicurean? A Matter of Life and Death](#)

In *Epicurus in Rome: Philosophical Perspectives in the Ciceronian Age*, ed. by S. Yona and G. Davis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, pp. 72-86.  
[www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)

Couple of sections that catch my attention:

### Quote

That Caesar was informed about Epicureanism is without doubt. Even if he had undergone no specifically philosophical training himself, a basic knowledge concerning the major philosophical schools was, by the first century BC, part and parcel of the Roman aristocracy's cultural competence, and Caesar can hardly have failed to pick up the principles of Rome's most fashionable philosophical creed. Furthermore, as has often been pointed out, many of Caesar's friends and followers were Epicureans. These include not only his father-in-law Piso, but also his trusted lieutenant C. Vibius Pansa Caetronianus and the jurist C. Trebatius Testa. In the case of such other Caesarians as L. Cornelius Balbus, A. Hirtius and C. Matius, we cannot be sure about their philosophical allegiance, but Epicurean leanings have often been suggested. While older views that Epicureanism provided a political ideology for the Caesarian party have long been debunked, and it is well established that Epicureans stood on both

sides of the Civil War, the concentration of putative Epicureans in Caesar's circle is still worth noting.

What is especially interesting is the evidence for Epicurean activity in the Caesarian camp during the campaigns in Gaul, Germany and Britain. Trebatius, who had joined Caesar's staff on the recommendation of Cicero, converted to Epicureanism in 53 BC, apparently under the influence of Pansa. His mentor back in Rome reacted in mock horror: "My friend Pansa tells me you have become an Epicurean. That's a great camp you got there!" (indicavit mihi Pansa meus Epicureum te esse factum. o castra praeclara!, Fam. 1.1.1). Just a year earlier, the leisure hours of the campaigning Caesarian officers may have been taken up with studying Lucretius' brand-new poem. As Christopher Krebs has shown, following F. R. Dale, Caesar himself must have read *On the Nature of Things* in 54, to judge from striking verbal echoes in Books 5, 6, and 7 of his *Gallic War*. It is possible that Caesar, and perhaps other philosophically interested members of his staff, were introduced to Lucretius by Quintus Cicero, who knew the poem by February 54 (Cic. QFr. 1.1.1) and joined Caesar's campaign shortly thereafter. Dale (1994, 111) fondly imagines that Caesar "read Lucretius with Quintus in Britain, on a summer evening in his tent."

Would be particularly interesting to follow up on the reference to verbal parallels between Lucretius and Caesar's "Gallic War"!