

Epicurus and His Influence on History, Ben Gazur,

Post by “Cleveland Okie” of March 31, 2025 at 9:02 PM

Epicurus and His Influence on History, Ben Gazur, Pen & Sword History, 2023

I bought this book as a Kindle in December 2024 for about \$4; Pen and Sword History, a publisher that publishes a lot of military history, often puts its titles on sale. I regret not publicizing here that it was on sale; I was under the impression that I bought it under the regular price. The Kindle is now about \$26, but I will let everyone know if it goes on sale again.

In any event, I thought the book was worth reading. The particular focus of the book is to trace the history of Epicureanism, from the founder and through various figures in history, including the people you already know, such as Lucretius and Thomas Jefferson.

A lot of this stuff was pretty familiar to me, and my favorite bits were about two Romans I had never heard of.

I had known through reading a book called *The Last Assassin: The Hunt for the Killers of Julius Caesar* by Peter Stothard that many of Caesar’s killers were Epicureans. So I was interested in the book’s discussion of a couple of Roman Epicureans I was unfamiliar with who did NOT get involved with politics in the waning days of the Roman Republic.

One of the chapters of the book is about Titus Pomponius, “called Atticus for his love of all things Athenian.”Gazur says it is not certain that Atticus was an Epicurean, but at the very least it appears he was interested in Epicureanism and influenced by it. (I noticed there was a thread about him on this forum, and I will look at it after I post this).

The book says that when Julius Caesar came to Athens, he stayed at Atticus’ home. It says Atticus did not take sides in various civil wars and conflicts. It also says, “His refusal to join a band of rich men in raising funds for Caesar’s assassins led to the collapse of the attempt. But when Brutus, who was a close friend, had to flee to exile he sent him money. He would not support a friend for political reasons, but never ignored a friend in need. When Brutus himself had fallen, Atticus extended friendship to the dead man’s mother, despite the risks.”

There is also a brief mention, citing Plutarch’s *Life of Brutus*, about Brutus’ failed attempt to persuade “Statilius the Epicurean” to join the murder plot against Caesar. “Statilius refused because no wise man would risk danger and civil strife to help the uneducated crowds in the streets,” the book relates.

By my count, I have now read 13 books about Epicureanism since becoming interested in the philosophy after reading the Letter to Menoecus. Here they are, with the most recently read books at the top:

Epicurus and His Influence on History, Ben Gazur

The Fourfold Remedy: Epicurus and the Art of Happiness, John Sellars.

A Few Days in Athens; being the Translation of a Greek Manuscript Discovered in Herculaneum,
Frances Wright

On the Nature of Things, Lucretius, Ian Johnston translator.

Epicureanism, Tim O'Keefe.

Tending the Epicurean Garden, Hiram Crespo.

The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia, Brad Inwood, Lloyd P. Gerson

Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance, Ada Palmer.

Living for Pleasure: An Epicurean Guide to Life, Emily
Austin.

How to Be an Epicurean: The Ancient Art of Living Well, Catherine Wilson.

Epicureanism: A Very Short Introduction, Catherine Wilson. 11-2021

Epicurus and His Philosophy, Norman W. DeWitt.

*EPICURUS and THE PLEASANT LIFE: A Philosophy of Nature Kindle Edition- November 30, 2022 -
Revised and Expanded 2nd Edition*, Haris Dimitriadis

My favorite is the Emily Austin; O'Keefe's book is a good outline of the philosophy. I got something out of each of these titles.

I have *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* on my Kindle and will read it soon, although I am thinking of re-reading the Austin again first.