

# Matthew Stewart: "Nature's God, The Heretical Origins Of The American Republic" (2015)

Post by "Cassius" of April 1, 2025 at 8:25 PM

I've seen this book praised many times here in the past by @Eikadistes and [Joshua](#) so it's well past time we have thread dedicated to it.

Just in the last week or so have I had time to pick it up, and I have to say I am very impressed so far. This is a subject (usually filed under "Deism") that I started reading into shortly after college, and it had a major impact on my thinking long before I picked up Epicurus. I'm less than a quarter of the way through it but I'm already very impressed by its level of detail, including material on Ethan Allen, whose "Reason The Only Oracle of Man" I read many years ago. But it had not sunk into my consciousness that there was a relationship between him and Thomas Young, a figure that I posted about years ago, but never pursued (that I can recall).

Thread

## [Thomas Young of Massachusetts](#)

Threadstarter post

This link comes from [Wikipedia on Thomas Young](#):

[https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent...=english\\_theses](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent...=english_theses)

[epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/2813/](http://epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/2813/)

(However this sounds like the writer's overlay rather than a cite to Epicurus.)

Another: [Reason and Revolution: The Radicalism of Thomas Young](#)

For me, the real litmus test of whether someone was an "Epicurean Influencer" often comes down to: *Did they embrace eternal universe rather than a Deistic clockmaker model?* Unless they...



Cassius

June 16, 2022 at 1:49 PM

While strictly speaking "Deism" is considered to be closer to the watchmaker model, where the universe was originally created by a supernatural god, and therefore not compatible with

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4368-matthew-stewart-nature-s-god-the-heretical-origins-of-the-american-republic-2015/?postID=34588#post34588>

Epicurean physics, it seems that there was a lot of variation among the thoughts of those who were labeled as deists, and some of them may indeed have had almost a full Epicurean viewpoint.

I post this because over time and new people discover this book, I'd like it to have a thread that people can find to add their thoughts. No doubt there are many details about people like Young who are mentioned in the book about whom it would be good to research to look for clues to the development of their thought and Epicurean connections.

Also, while we always need to steer clear of contemporary partisan politics, I think one of the most important implications of studying these figures is the connection between their "activism" and their Epicurean-adjacent worldviews. It seems like almost a whole generation of people, even those who were not as educated as others, understood that this non-supernatural worldview logically leads to greater, not not lesser, interest in and engagement with the world around them. And rather than living in "fear" or being unwilling to experience any pain at all, they went to a lot of effort and personal risk to pursue living as they thought it should be conducted.

It's frustrating to read in Stewart's book about how so many of them from Washington and Franklin and even Jefferson kept their views to themselves, no doubt out of concern for what would happen to them if they were too vocal. Even so it is motivating to read about these figures and consider the extent to which we can add to their work given that our environment -- at least for now -- allows many of us to speak a little more openly than was available to them.