

# A Special Birthday Greeting To James!

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Today is not only the Twentieth of January, and a time of the year close to Epicurus' birthday, but it is the birthday of a 14-year-old who I don't know personally but am told (by his father) was introduced to Epicurus by my "Catus' Cat" poem some years ago.

I understand he is very much into Science, which is great, and also Math, which can also be good when kept on a tight leash! 😊 No doubt the story of Polyoenus is relevant here, and I think Frances Wright was likely correct when she wrote in "A Few Days In Athens" that Epicurus did not tell him to give up his studies so much as to be sure they were kept in proper proportion:

### [Quote from Frances Wright - A Few Days In Athens - Chapter 9](#)

"With regard to the sciences, if it be said, that they are neglected among us, I do not say that our master, though himself versed in them, as in all other branches of knowledge, greatly recommends them to our study but that they are not unknown, let Polyoenus be evidence.

"He, one of the most amiable men of our school, and one most highly favored by our master, you must have heard mentioned throughout Greece as a profound geometrician."

"Yes," replied Theon, "but I have also heard, that since entering the garden, he has ceased to respect his science."

"I am not aware of that," said Leontium, "though I believe he no longer devotes to it all his time, and all his faculties. Epicurus called him from his diagrams, to open to him the secrets of physics, and the beauties of ethics; to show him the springs of human action, and lead him to the study of the human mind. He taught him, that any single study, however useful and noble in itself, was yet unworthy the entire employ of a curious and powerful intellect; that the man who pursued one line of knowledge, to the exclusion of others, though he should follow it up to its very head, would never be either learned or wise; that he who pursues knowledge, should think no branch of it unworthy attention; least of all, should he confine it to those which are unconnected with the business, and add nothing to the pleasures of life; that further not our acquaintance with ourselves, nor our fellows; that tend not to enlarge the sphere of our affections, to multiply our ideas and sensations, nor extend the scope of our inquiries. On this ground, he blamed

the devotion of Polyenus to a science that leads to other truths than those of virtue, to other study than that of man."

The issue of proportion is similar to the issue of timing, and that occurs to me as something to stress to a young person. While the goal of happiness through "pleasure" applies at any age, there are things that you can do only when you are young. I understand Martin has gone Zip-lining recently so's he's helping push the boundaries there, but certainly there are things like "having children" that can only be done before a certain age.

Diogenes of Oinoanda dedicated his inscription in part to future generations, and Epicurus provided for the children of Metrodorus and for the continuance of his school far into the future. In case that needs to be made plain, he didn't just say: "Ok guys and gals when this current generation is gone the school can go ahead and shut down because we will have accomplished all that needs to be done!"

So I want to say how much I appreciate hearing that someone as young as James has taken an interest in Epicurus, and I hope that will continue. I'm also aware that the daughter of Amrinder Singh (a member of the group who lost his life while properly pursuing a happy life that included ultralight aircraft), and I hope there are others. We need more children introduced to Epicurus both in our own families and beyond.

As a practical matter it's my goal in 2026 and beyond to make sure we at Epicureanfriends are focusing on introducing younger people to Epicurus. That would be right in line with Epicurus himself and Diogenes Laertius and I feel sure every other true Epicurean in the ancient world.

Torquatus: "Epicurus, then, was not destitute of learning; but those persons are ignorant who think that those studies which it is discreditable for boys not to have learnt are to be continued till old age."

