

The "Suggested Further Reading" in "Living for Pleasure"

Post by "Cleveland Okie" of January 21, 2026 at 10:25 PM

Reading books tends to be my main method for studying Epicureanism, although I do sometimes participate in this forum. By my count, I have read 15 books about Epicureanism so far. (I say "by my count" because deciding whether to list a title in my "Epicurean Books Read" list that keep involves some judgment calls; I count *Hellenic Philosophy* by John Sellars because I read it mostly to learn more about Epicureanism, but I don't count *The Swerve* by Stephen Greenblatt because I read it before I became interested in Epicureanism).

My favorite book about Epicureanism is *Living for Pleasure* by philosophy professor Emily Austin. I have read it three times and I suspect I will read it again.

Searching for a way to learn from Professor Austin besides reading her book over and over again, I have paid attention to the "Suggested Further Reading" section in the back of the book. I have now read most of the books she recommends and here are my notes, with the caution that I don't claim to be a scholar of Greek philosophy, just somebody with an interest in Epicureanism who hasn't been kicked out of this forum yet. I will list each title that Austin recommends and then offer a comment.

The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia. 1994. Translated and edited by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson.

As you might guess from the title, the book consists of modern English translations not only of Epicurus' surviving writings but also useful works by Cicero, Plutarch, etc. I keep a copy of my Kindle book on the Kindle app on my smartphone for ready reference, something I also do with Austin's book.

Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings, Inwood and Gerson again. I haven't read this yet, because my main interest is in Epicureanism, although I have come to understand it is useful and interesting to know about the historical context of Epicureanism. This book also is recommended by philosophy professor John Sellars, who I'll mention below.

Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*. Professor Austin suggests the Martin Ferguson Smith translation for readers who want prose, and the Ronald Melville translation for a verse rendition.

Professor Austin is of course correct in suggesting that any serious Epicurean should read Lucretius. I have not read either of these translations, simply because I already had a translation on my Kindle, one done by Ian Johnston.

Epicureanism, Tim O'Keefe, 2009. I thought this book was very good. Whereas the Austin book is aimed at the interested layman, O'Keefe seems to aim mainly at college students studying philosophy. That said, I found his book easier going than many other philosophy books. I plan to read it again soon.

When I emailed Professor O'Keefe (he is a philosophy professor at Georgia State University), I mentioned that I read his book because Professor Austin recommended it. He replied, "I think Emily Austin's book is just outstanding."

The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism, edited by James Warren.

This is a collection of 15 essays on various topics by a number of different scholars. I found 14 of the essays to be interesting and useful, although "Epicurean Philosophy of Language" by Catherine Atherton was too technical for me to follow. There's a wide range of topics and I suspect that most people on this forum would be interested in many of the essays. This is probably a good book to read after you've read a couple of the surveys, such as Austin's.

The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius, Gillespie and Hardie. I haven't gotten around to this one yet.

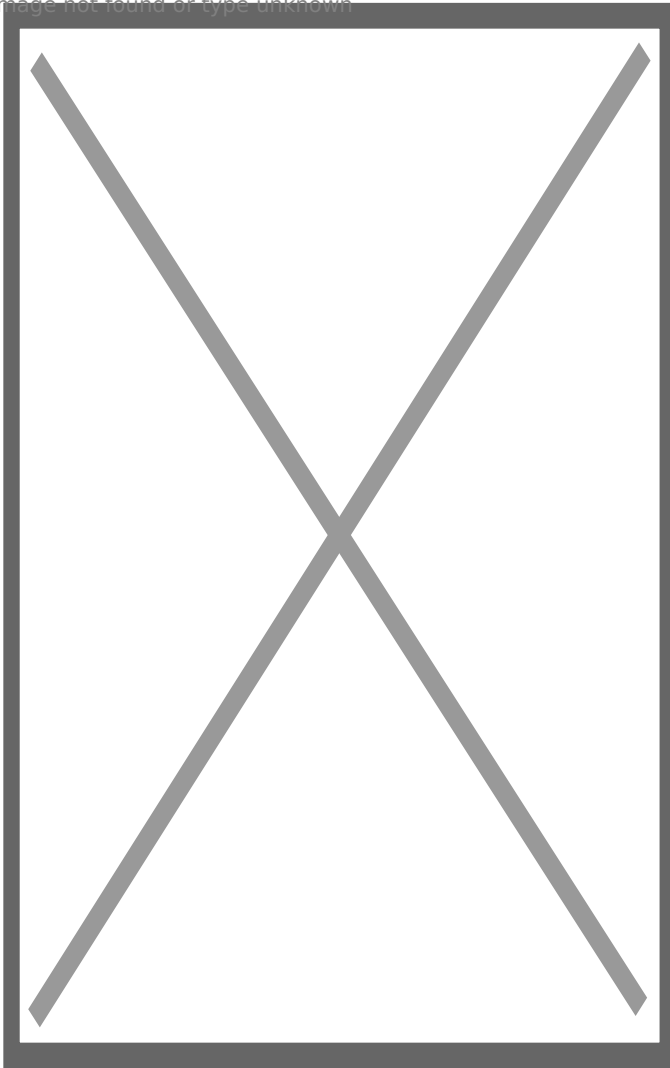
The Swerve, Stephen Greenblatt. A fun book. I read it before I became interested in Epicureanism. I was then mainly interested in book collecting and the recovery of ancient texts. Poggio Bracciolini is one of my heroes.

Hellenistic Philosophy, John Sellars. This book focuses mainly on Epicureanism, Stoicism and Skepticism, although he also lets you know that the Academics and Peripatetics were up to during the period. This is the most recent book I have read. I got interested in reading this book after I read *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* and realized I would understand Epicureanism better if I knew more about its context in the Hellenistic period. This is a good book and Sellars, despite his reputation as a Stoicism expert, is very lucid in discussing Epicureanism. I also like Sellars' short book, *The Fourfold Remedy*, which discusses Epicurean ethics.

I have a blog devoted to the writers Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea, and I have posted twice there about *Hellenistic Philosophy*, if anyone is interested.

Here is the main post on the book:

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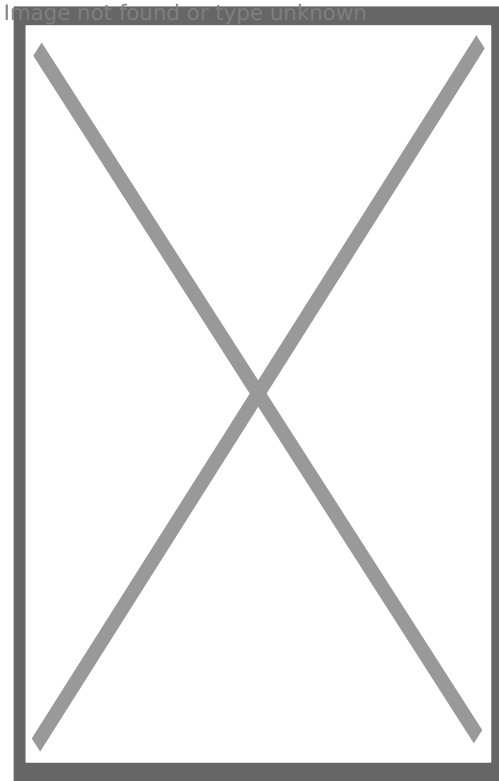
[An interesting philosophy book](#)

I have been reading an interesting book that I had my wife give me for Christmas: Hellenistic Philosophy by John Sellars. If you aren't fa...

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When I reached the end of the book, I discovered a fascinating appendix on encounters between Greek philosophers and their counterparts in India, Buddhists and Brahmins, so I did a separate blog post:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4915-the-suggested-further-reading-in-living-for-pleasure/?postID=38518#post38518>



[Greek philosophers interacted with Buddhists and Hindus, back in the day](#)

I have already done a blog post on Hellenistic Philosophy by John Sellars. As I mentioned earlier, it focuses on three main philosophical...

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Cicero: On Moral Ends, edited by Julia Annas, translated by Raphael Woolf.

I haven't read this book, either. In his *Hellenistic Philosophy* book, Sellars recommends reading Cicero, although he adds other works are needed to provide a "balanced picture" of Epicureanism.