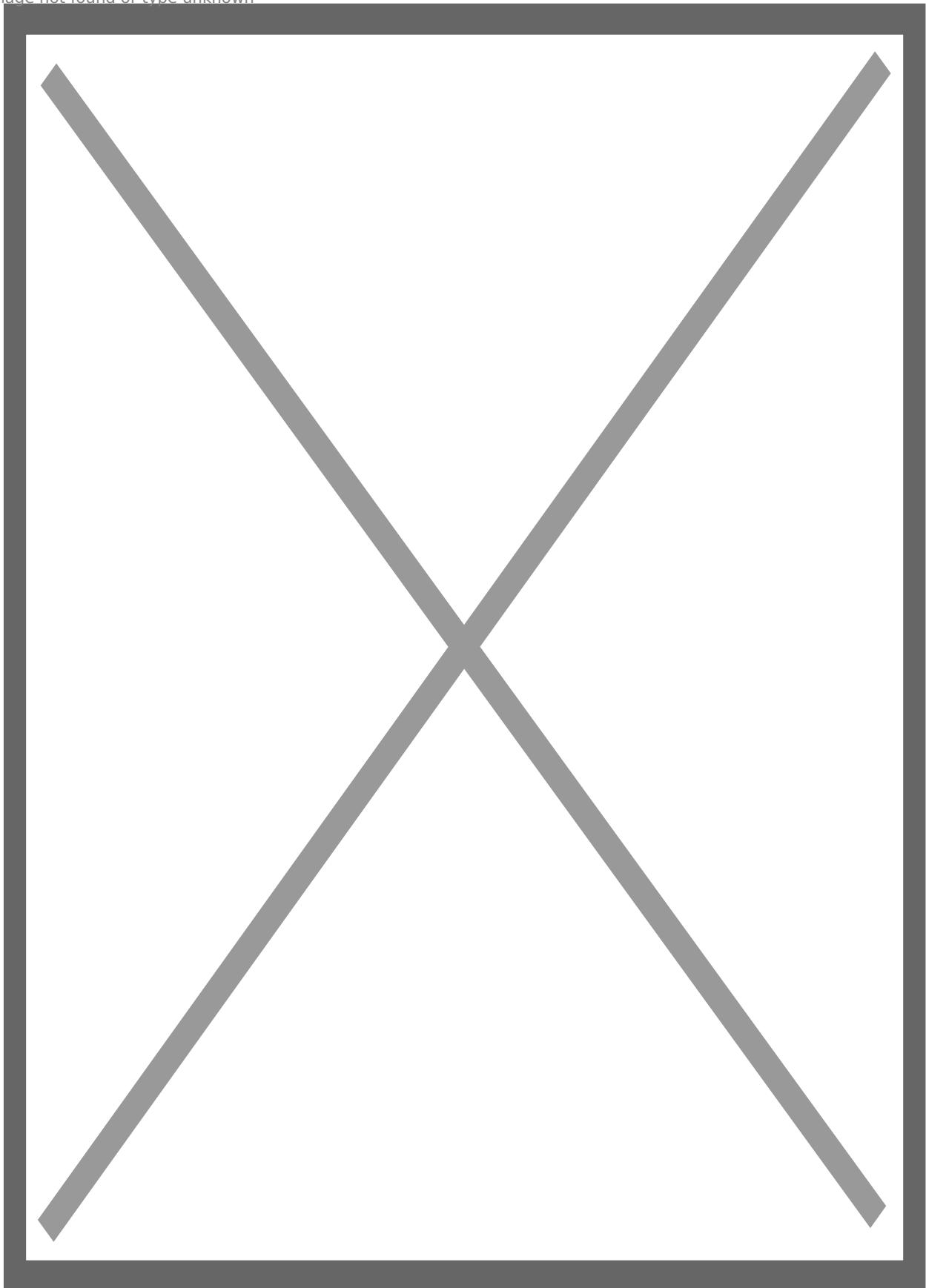


# **Klavan's "Gateway To Epicureanism" (Note: The Title Is Part Of A "Gateway" Series - The Author Himself Is Strongly Anti-Epicurean)**

**Post by "Cassius" of April 14, 2026 at 5:50 PM**

There is also this that Klavan has written on Epicurus:

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/5040-klavan-s-gateway-to-epicureanism-note-the-title-is-part-of-a-gateway-series-the/?postID=39386#post39386>

[All the Small Things: Epicureanism, Then and Now](#)

SPENCER KLAVAN What really matters in the world?

antigonejournal.com

And here is how Claude summarizes his views:

Here is a detailed account of Spencer Klavan's evaluation of Epicurean philosophy, drawn from his published writings and his recent book.

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## Spencer Klavan on Epicurean Philosophy

Klavan has engaged Epicureanism more thoroughly than almost any other contemporary conservative commentator, having edited and introduced a primary-source anthology, written a feature essay for *Antigone* journal, and discussed the subject on multiple podcasts. His view is a mixture of genuine scholarly respect and sharp philosophical opposition.

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### 1. He Sees Epicureanism as the Dominant Modern Worldview — and a Problem

Klavan's most striking thesis is that Epicurus is not a historical curiosity but the unacknowledged architect of contemporary secular liberalism. In his introduction to the anthology *Gateway to the Epicureans*, Klavan argues that Epicurus is "acknowledged or not — the source of secular 'woke' liberalism," and that the overwhelming success of modern science has turned what was once a fringe ancient philosophy into "the governing worldview of nearly everyone." [Annie Blooms](#) He quotes John Adams to drive home the point: "Two and a half centuries ago, John Adams complained, 'Our modern philosophers are all the low grovelling disciples of Epicurus.' That's even truer today." [Annie Blooms](#)

He identifies a whole constellation of ideas flowing from ancient atomism into the present: along with the new atomism has come "a whole constellation of fashionable Epicurean ideas: that peace and contentment are the most important things in life, that reality is an infinite expanse of multiverses, that divine power has no part to play in human affairs." [Annie Blooms](#)

## 2. He Takes the Epicurean Argument Seriously — on Its Own Terms

Klavan is careful not to caricature Epicurus. In his *Antigone* essay, he notes that Epicureanism "was (disappointingly) not the invitation to horny debauchery that has become associated with its name," but rather "a shot across the bow of the Socratic tradition, which agreed with conventional wisdom, at least insofar as it tended to view human life in the context of a divinely governed universe." [Antigone](#)

He summarizes the core Epicurean theological argument fairly: the trouble was not with belief in deities but with "the absurd presumption that such deities would ever give a moment's thought to mortals," citing Diogenes Laertius (*Lives* 10.123–4): "These assertions that people make about the gods are not innate convictions but inaccurate assumptions, which teach them that the gods do harm to bad men and reward good men." [Antigone](#)

He traces the argument's modern resonance, showing how Hume and Stephen Hawking are effectively channeling Epicurus, and takes this lineage seriously rather than dismissing it.

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## 3. His Core Philosophical Objection: The Self-Defeating Logic of Cosmic Insignificance

Klavan's deepest criticism is not theological but logical. He targets what he calls "Cosmic Insignificance Therapy" — the modern Epicurean-derived self-help claim that our smallness in the universe should be *relaxing*. He identifies this as "Epicurean, through and through," tracing it back to Democritus' *euthymia* and Epicurus' *ataraxia*. [Antigone](#)

His objection is that this reasoning is self-undermining: "if small things don't matter, nothing does. There is no philosophically rigorous way to draw the line between things that are big enough to be consequential, and things that are not. Do cities matter, but not individuals? Do planets, but not countries? Quasars, but not quarks?" [Antigone](#)

He pushes this further: the physical consequences of Epicurean insignificance extend not just to seminar attendance but to "your marriage and family, your kid's first birthday, your parents' burial, your contributions to science or literature, your ancestry, your entire civilization, your species and your planet. Small, small, small." [Antigone](#)

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## 4. His Counter-Thesis: Logos, Meaning, and the Socratic Tradition

Against Epicurean materialism, Klavan defends the Stoic/Platonic idea that a rational order (*logos*) governs the cosmos in a way that is attentive to human moral life. He argues that the very existence of the laws of physics "counts as further indication that the structure of our thoughts bears some relation to the structure of the cosmos," citing Einstein's ability to predict stellar phenomena from earthly reasoning as evidence that "some parts of our minds are structured not just in response to our local environment, but in conformity with the scaffolding of all things." [Antigone](#)

He closes by invoking William James: the fundamental article of faith is "that there is a truth, and that our minds and it are made for each other" — the very thing Epicurean materialism denies. [Antigone](#)

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## 5. Summary Verdict

Klavan's position is that Epicureanism is intellectually serious, historically influential, and philosophically important to understand — but ultimately self-defeating. It begins by liberating humanity from superstitious fear and ends by stripping life of all significance. He regards it as the deep philosophical root of modern secular liberalism, which in his view is a civilizational crisis, not a triumph.

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### Primary sources:

- Klavan's *Antigone* essay (May 2025): <https://antigonejournal.com/2025/05/epicureanism-then-and-now/>
- *Gateway to the Epicureans* (his edited anthology): <https://annieblooms.com/book/9781684515165>
- *The New Thinkery* podcast episode on Epicureanism (Feb. 2025): <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/spe...i=1000696197986>