

Innovations/Updates in Epicurus Philosophy

Post by “Cassius” of April 18, 2026 at 4:23 PM

[Quote from Matteng](#)

in one of Hiram's essays about the 4. criterion of the Canon he mentions rules for Innovations or Updating the Philosophy.

This is one of the basic differences between Hiram's approach and that which I set out to accomplish here in forming EpicureanFriends. Our focus is on understanding the philosophy as it was originally taught, which we are all including me very far from doing, not attempting to account for every "what-about" that has occurred over the last two thousand years.

We inevitably do some of that here and i don't see anything wrong with some amount of discussion on this, and I have a lot of respect for Hiram personally and for his enthusiasm for Epicurus.

However I do want to say that it's likely I'm going to moderate this thread to keep it from getting out of hand and distracting us from our core mission. For an example of how that can happen, we still have on the forum [one of our longest threads from many years ago](#) when we attempted (and failed) to hammer out a common approach on how to "organize" our efforts. I encourage people on the forum now to read over that thread because it's a very interesting discussion of how people can be generally on the same team but see game plans very differently.

Those who are really interested in pursuing "Neo-Epicureanism" - which is against one of our most clear site rules, should pursue that at Reddit or some other location. I wish them well in doing so, but this is not the place to pursue that in the way that some would like.

Again I'll say that a general discussion is probably ok. But everyone who wants to talk about some aspect of Physics needing to be updated is in my opinion mainly displaying that they do not yet understand Epicurus' approach to physics, which focuses on ultimate conceptual issues (e.g. infinite divisibility) rather than contemporary opinions on limited data. That is exactly the reason for our rule against pursuing "neo-Epicureanism."

[Quote from Matteng](#)

Which basic principles are close to be „timeless“ or “hardcore“ ?

That's what we pursue in discussion about the principles which are listed on the front page as the focus of the work here. We've had much discussion about those in the past and more

discussion is welcome. so long of course as it's in the spirit of "this is what Epicurus actually taught" and not something that someone thinks he *should* have taught.

To some extent that includes the "fourth criteria" of the canon. That in itself is clearly stated by Diogenes Laertius to be something that later Epicureans added, and as Norman DeWitt argues, they added it because they did not understand the circularity that it creates by including in the canon something that is created by our own mental processing of the data from the senses, rather than from automatic functioning without opinion.

That too is something that sincere people disagree on, but as we can see in Torquatus there was already a tendency to water down after he was gone- in terms of the argument for friendship - what Epicurus had taught when he was alive.

I am sure we've had previous discussions on that and we can link to those and pursue them further, because clearly the present impressions of the mind are involved in Epicurean epistemology. But we're already on thin ice when embracing a formulation that Epicurus himself did not embrace.

I don't mean this post to sound harsh Matteng because I know you are sincere and I know you haven't been involved in our past discussions on these issues. Every so often it's going to be appropriate to air them all out again so people can know where everyone stands. This difference in approaches is why we have at least two separate websites devoted to the study of Epicurus in different ways, and in truth there are many more approaches, such as that at the Twentiers website and the website of the Athenian Garden in Greece.

We are all pursuing the study of Epicurus as we see best, and it's my strong opinion that we're all making better progress pursuing out individual threads than we would be if we were constantly "turned off" by the approach of people who are friends but who see things differently.

EDIT: I want to add that I have now seen the recent article by Hiram as to the Fourth Criterion, and he makes very clear in the article itself that there are many questions around the addition of the fourth. So to be clear his article seems to me to do a good job of pointing out the issues involved.