

# How To Convert A Neo-Epicurean Into A Classical Epicurean

Post by "Charles" of May 1, 2020 at 2:00 PM

[melkor](#) While there is no solid definition of Neo-Epicureanism, we can say with confidence that its someone who takes a specific interpretation on Epicurus, one that deviates away from Epicurus & Lucretius most notably in ethics and by extension, politics.

The most common Neo-Epicurean takes I hear are some of the following: pleasure is the absence of pain, Epicurus advocated for calm, rational pleasures over bodily pleasures, that Epicurus was celibate or lived frugally like an ascetic, that friendship is the \*greatest\* pleasure, or advocating a specific contemporary political stance claiming Epicurus would've done the same (Catherine Wilson for example does this with abortion).

A lot of Neo-Epicureanism stems from a deviation of hedonism following the 19th century with thinkers like J. S. Mills or Bentham, the idea of there being "higher and lower pleasures" or adopting pleasure into some societal model like Utilitarianism. Of course there is also Marx & Engels who wrote about Lucretius and the former's doctoral thesis was on Democritean & Epicurean Atomism. But these writers and thinkers differed from the 18th century hedonists by prioritizing things other than pleasure, they refused to be apologists for the garden or of pleasure itself.

Opening up to these revisions and scapegoats has allowed this new (Neo) and modern interpretation of Epicurean Ethics (Epicureanism), with one particular paragraph within the Letter to Menoceus dominate public perception and most academic attention onto the subject, thus creating Neo-Epicureanism, or at least that's my interpretation as to how this vast difference came to be.

I'm forgetting to mention influences like Buddhism and the trend of minimalism as well, but I think my point was established in the origins of it, rather than contemporary influences.

## Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean

1. Not "flourishing," "human potential," "self-actualization," or "meaningfulness," but happiness grounded in the feeling of pleasure.
2. Not "absence of pain" as a full statement of the goal of life, but "the Feelings are two, pleasure and pain" and "Pleasure is the beginning and the end of a happy life."
3. Not virtue for the sake of virtue, but virtue as instrumental for the attainment of pleasure.
4. Not "the greatest good for the greatest number," but "Every desire must be confronted with this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished and what if it is not?"
5. Not "humanism," "transhumanism," "individualism," "collectivism," "egoism," "altruism," "social progress," "Marxism," "democracy," "tyranny," or any "one size fits all" political ideal of any kind, but social structure

<https://www.leibnizgenetics.com/for-the-greatest-number-converting-epicurus-to-comarines-will-epicurean-poster-17-11-2019-12-01-2019>

