

[Historical Records] from The Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group

Post by “Cassius” of October 10, 2015 at 7:02 PM

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Welcome to **This Week in Epicurean Philosophy** for the week of 10/10/15! To subscribe (at no cost) click [here](#).

This is the one hundred and twenty-seventh in a series of weekly reports on news from the world of Epicurean Philosophy. At the [Epicurean Philosophy Group](#) we are dedicated to the study and productive discussion of Epicurean Philosophy and its application to daily life. Our goal is also, in the words of Lucian, to "**strike a blow for Epicurus - that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams, who alone had and imparted true insight into the good, and who brought deliverance to all that consorted with him!**"

This week: more on how we console ourselves to the death of loved ones.

Last week we marked the death of Erik Anderson, founder of the Epicurus.info website, as recorded in his [obituary](#). This week, I am still caught up in thinking about how short life is, and how important it is for us to make the best use of the time that we have. As I also mentioned last week in discussing Erik's death, a very close friend of my own died last week. This past week has been spent meeting with his widow and hearing about my friend's final months struggling with a heart condition that should have been curable, and that has kept the issue of reconciling with death front and center in my mind.

There are many ancient Epicurean passages that deal with the loss of a loved one to death, but a longer passage that stands out was written in the 1800's by Frances Wright and given to Epicurus to say in chapter ten of [A Few Days In Athens](#) stands out. If you haven't yet read [A Few Days In Athens](#), I hope this extended quote will encourage you to take the plunge:

"But there is yet a pain, which the wisest and the best of men cannot escape; that all of us, my sons, have felt, or have to feel. Do not your hearts whisper it? Do you not tell me, that in death there is yet a sting? That ere he aim at us, he may level the beloved of our soul? The father, whose tender care hath reared our infant minds — the brother, whom the same breast hath nourished, and the same roof sheltered, with whom, side by side, we have grown like two plants by a river, sucking life from the same fountain and strength from the same sun — the child whose gay prattle delights our ears, or whose opening understanding fixes our hopes — the friend of our choice, with whom we have exchanged hearts, and shared all our pains and pleasures, whose eye hath reflected the tear of sympathy, whose hand hath smoothed the couch of sickness. Ah! my sons, here indeed is a pain — a pain that cuts into the soul. There are masters that will tell you otherwise; who will tell you that it is unworthy of a man to mourn even here. But such, my sons, speak not the truth of experience or philosophy, but the subtleties of sophistry and pride. He who feels not the loss, hath never felt the possession. He who knows not the grief, hath never known the joy. See the price of a friend in the duties we render him,

and the sacrifices we make to him, and which, in making, we count not sacrifices, but pleasures. We sorrow for his sorrow; we supply his wants, or, if we cannot, we share them. We follow him to exile. We close ourselves in his prison; we soothe him in sickness; we strengthen him in death: nay, if it be possible, we throw down our life for his. Oh! What a treasure is that for which we do so much! And is it forbidden to us to mourn its loss? If it be, the power is not with us to obey.

Should we, then, to avoid the evil, forego the good? Shall we shut love from our hearts, that we may not feel the pain of his departure? No; happiness forbids it. Experience forbids it. Let him who hath laid on the pyre the dearest of his soul, who hath washed the urn with the bitterest tears of grief — let him say if his heart hath ever formed the wish that it had never shrined within it him whom he now deploras. Let him say if the pleasures of the sweet communion of his former days doth not still live in his remembrance. If he love not to recall the image of the departed, the tones of his voice, the words of his discourse, the deeds of his kindness, the amiable virtues of his life. If, while he weeps the loss of his friend, he smiles not to think that he once possessed him. He who knows not friendship, knows not the purest pleasure of earth. Yet if fate deprive us of it, though we grieve, we do not sink; Philosophy is still at hand, and she upholds us with fortitude. And think, my sons, perhaps in the very evil we dread, there is a good; perhaps the very uncertainty of the tenure gives it value in our eyes; perhaps all our pleasures take their zest from the known possibility of their interruption. What were the glories of the sun, if we knew not the gloom of darkness? What the refreshing breezes of morning and evening, if we felt not the fervors of noon? Should we value the lovely-flower, if it bloomed eternally; or the luscious fruit, if it hung always on the bough? Are not the smiles of the heavens more beautiful in contrast with their frowns, and the delights of the seasons more grateful from their vicissitudes? Let us then be slow to blame nature, for perhaps in her apparent errors there is hidden a wisdom. Let us not quarrel with fate, for perhaps in our evils lie the seeds of our good. Were our body never subject to sickness, we might be insensible to the joy of health. Were our life eternal, our tranquillity might sink into inaction. Were our friendship not threatened with interruption, it might want much of its tenderness. This, then, my sons, is our duty, for this is our interest and our happiness; to seek our pleasures from the hands of the virtues, and for the pain which may befall us, to submit to it with patience, or bear up against it with fortitude. To walk, in short, through life innocently and tranquilly; and to look on death as its gentle termination, which it becomes us to meet with ready minds, neither regretting the past, nor anxious for the future."

From the Facebook Group this week:

This past week Hiram [posted a link to a great collection of Epicurean "memes"](#) and pamphlets which can be used to share information about Epicurus in graphic form. One of the materials listed there is a PDF of [Norman DeWitt's Philosophy for the Millions](#), an excellent introduction to the significance of Epicurus and his philosophy.


Uwe F. posted a link to [an interesting article on Lucretius' choice of style for persuasion](#).


Hiram also posted a link to an upcoming release by Michael Onfrey entitled ["A Hedonist Manifesto: The Power to Exist."](#) This is the English translation of a book that was published in French a number of years ago, and it's right on target with many issues of interest to the student of Epicurus. From the Amazon page: "Onfrey attacks Platonic idealism and its


manifestation in Judaic, Christian, and Islamic belief. He warns of the lure of attachment to the purportedly eternal, immutable truths of idealism, which detracts from the immediacy of the world and our bodily existence. Insisting that philosophy is a practice that operates in a real, material space, Onfray enlists Epicurus and Democritus to undermine idealist and theological metaphysics; Nietzsche, Bentham, and Mill to dismantle idealist ethics; and Palante and Bourdieu to collapse crypto-fascist neoliberalism. In their place, he constructs a positive, hedonistic ethics that enlarges on the work of the New Atheists to promote a joyful approach to our lives in this, our only, world."


Hiram also posted a link to [a very good video on Richard Dawkins](#) on how we should deal with assertions by religion which by nature cannot be proved. Dawkins emphasizes that relativism is not a sufficient response to religion, a point of view we often hear expressed as "everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts."


Recent significant posts at [NewEpicurean.com](#):

 ["Quantity" Does Not Equal "Type"](#)The diagram associated with this post is intended to dramatize the question: Does any quantity of a thing ever change that thing into its opposite? When Epicurus stated that there...

 [Peace and Safety For Your Twentieth of September! - An Overview of the Letter to Herodotus](#)Peace and Safety to the Epicureans of today, no matter where you might be! This month for the Twentieth, I offer a quick outline of the major points of...

 [Fundamentals of Epicurean Philosophy - An Outline](#)(Click on the bullet to the left of each item to expand.) This outline represents my latest aid to discussing Epicurus with people who are new to the philosophy. I can't...

 [All Dressed Up But No Place To Go](#)Thanks to Alexander R. for linking to this video at the Science Channel, which alleges that the robot in this example is well on its way to learning emotional associations....

 [A Season Of The Year To Remember Fallen Epicureans](#)Checking back over the last four years, it seems that late in August of odd-numbered years I have resubmitted the following post on "A Season of the Year To Remember Fallen..."

Thanks to all who participated in the Facebook forum this week. As always, if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please add a comment or participate in the [Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group!](#)

- - - Live Well!

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Resources for Epicurean Philosophy On The Internet

There are many find Epicurean websites on the internet, so be sure you are aware of the main ones. This newsletter is brought to you by

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/www.NewEpicurean.com>. Two other very active and important websites are SocietyofEpicurus.com and Menoceus.blogspot.com. There is also an active website in Greece (mostly in the Greek language) at Epicuros.net. Please be sure to check the list at EpicurusCentral.wordpress.net for a full list, and let us know if other sites should be mentioned here.

Options for those who wish to discuss Epicurus on the internet include:1- If you are focused primarily on Epicurus, and you want to participate in a forum where people will defend Epicurus strongly from all challenges, then you have two Facebook options. Our open and main group, entitled simply "[Epicurean Philosophy](#)," is the home base of this post. Anyone can read the posts there, and all you have to do is ask in order to join. (Note that there is an "About" and a "Sticky" post with our forum rules.)

2 - If you are someone whose views are fully formed, and you've combined several disparate viewpoints into your own personal mix, and you mainly want to talk casually to other people of the same eclectic type, there are several excellent facebook groups including [EPISTOBUZEN](#) and "[Epicureanism for Modern Times](#)." 3 - If you prefer to post in a "private" group where your posts are not readable by outsiders, we have "Epicurean Private Garden." Because it is a private group, you cannot find it by searching, and you have to email one of our admins in the open group if you wish to join. Please note that our About and Sticky Post rules in the private forum are the same as the open forum, and the private forum will be moderated to the same standards as the open forum (or perhaps slightly tighter!)

4 - If you are not only focused primarily on Epicurus, but you wish to assist with a forum platform where pro-Epicurean activists can build for the future, check out <https://www.epicureanfriends.com/> Work is starting on a FAQ and other resources. Anyone can read the posts, but only approved members can create new posts or comment.

5 - If your interest is primarily on the scientific research side, such as implications of quantum mechanics and related theories, be sure to check out "[Epicurean Touchpoints](#)" at Facebook. Please be sure to check out the list of websites at <http://www.epicuruscentral.wordpress.net/> for the latest available sites. If you know of sites that should be mentioned here, please [send me an email](#).

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