

# [Historical Records] from The Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group

Post by "Cassius" of November 7, 2015 at 9:08 PM

Welcome to **This Week in Epicurean Philosophy** for the week of 11/7/15! To subscribe (at no cost) click [here](#).

This is the one hundred and thirty-first 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!**"

## The Proper Starting Point

Recently in another philosophy forum I observed a debate over the best place to start in organizing one's outlook on life. The poster was an experienced reader in philosophy and knew the official drill - that ethics is secondary to metaphysics (the nature of the universe) and to epistemology (the science of how we have confidence in what we claim to know). Nevertheless, the poster wanted to challenge that sequence and assert that it is naive to give priority to metaphysics and epistemology, because as a matter of indisputable fact the great majority of people first decide what they **wish** to be true in ethics - generally because they "feel" their position to be right.

Having selected their preferred ethical positions, such people simply shop around for whatever metaphysical or epistemological viewpoints seem to strike their fancy at the moment, flipping often from one viewpoint to another. As a result, these people tend to conclude that metaphysics and epistemology are of less importance, and the very names of these branches of philosophy fade into the background of their minds.

It takes only a brief study to see how dramatically Epicurus disagreed with this majority viewpoint. Whether one chooses to read the letters of Epicurus, the poem of Lucretius, or the inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda, the conclusion is inescapable. The Epicurean thought process focused did not start with ethics, but started first on studying the nature of the universe, checked immediately by studying the question of how it is our observations about the universe can be deemed to be reliable.

In a primitive world where superstition held the upper hand, it was critically important to understand that atoms and void, and not gods, provided the laws of motion and activity. It was no less important to show that despite the illusions and possibilities of error, Nature has provided us with mechanisms - faculties of observation - that can be trusted to produce reliable results. The ancient Epicureans knew that they had no hope of confidence in their theories if they could not break free of blind fear of the gods and of skeptical know-nothing philosophies. And so the only way to break free from those errors was to discover the true nature of the

universe and the true nature of knowledge. It was on these foundations, and not on their personal wishes, that the Epicurean founders erected the only major Western system of thought anchored firmly in the nature of things.

In the modern world we have flattered ourselves to believe that we no longer need these Epicurean starting points. Throwing caution to the wind and leaning fully on the promises of public education, men and women of science have entrusted generations of children to teachers who were often steeped in the same skepticism and religion which Epicurus had rebelled against.

I find it difficult to believe that many people can still have confidence in a rosy outlook arising from modern education. Across the globe Western civilization faces challenges from anti-scientific cultural orientations, and the establishments of the West seem only to compete in rushing toward their own destruction.

In this environment there is a great need to remind people that long before Greco-Roman civilization was itself overcome by other-worldly cultural influences two thousand years ago, the antidote to mysticism had been developed in Athens. One man had stood up and shown the way to defeat both skeptical know-nothings in philosophy and the zealotry in religious mysticism.

As we face those same two challenges again today, we ought to stop and look at the method of argument Epicurus chose to wage his battle. Epicurus did not start by selecting an ethical system to suit his taste. Not only did he want nothing less than the truth, Epicurus knew that only reasoned argument based on observation was enough to give one confidence that a system preferred by Nature actually existed.

Many of us find great personal comfort in studying Epicurus and learning that the standards of the modern commercial, centralized, mystical, and yet also skeptical world are not the only standards that one can choose to follow. But even as we find personal comfort in knowing that there is nothing to fear in death, that the gods do not choose our fate, and that real happiness is possible living life here on earth, many of us face fear and anxiety worrying about the future of our relatives and friends in a world spinning out of control.

The philosophy of Epicurus can show the way forward to both personal and community happiness. Epicurean philosophy was not defeated because it was wrong, but because having the right ideas is never sufficient for living successfully. Living successfully requires action, and as the years went by in the ancient world, those who fought for Epicurean ways of life did not develop the actions required to stem the tide of mysticism and skepticism.

Today, Epicurean philosophy can lead to successful action only when it is properly understood. Much work needs to be done to show the world that Epicurus pointed toward happiness, not stoic emotionlessness, as the goal of life. Likewise, people must come to see that the Epicurean method leads to confidence that our actions can be effective, not resignation that we are the playthings of fate.

The proper place to start is to begin to follow the path first staked out thousand years ago - the trail blazed by Epicurus.


**Also from the Facebook Group this week:**


At the Epicurean Facebook group this week Illka V. posted that we should soon have access to [an excellent new lecture by Stephen Greenblatt, author of "The Swerve."](#) We also received


some good news this week that even though the full Epicurus.info site is not yet back up, [important parts of it are available by checking at least two other locations](#) where mirrors have been established.


Also, Jason B. linked to an [inspiring life outlook by a 92-year old lady](#) that rings with Epicurean perspective, and Leonard M. linked to a Yale lecture on [Roman influences in the later development of Athens](#).


### **Recent Posts at [NewEpicurean.com](#):**

 [Dawn of A New Age Of Epicurus](#) If you follow the world of politics, the last ten days in the USA have provided an important reminder: where passions run high, truth is often the first casualty. If...

 [Peace and Safety For Your Twentieth of October - Tips on Epicurean Reasoning from Philodemus](#) Peace and Safety to the Epicureans of today, no matter where you might be! Every day, not just the Twentieth, is a good day to remember that Epicurean philosophy teaches a...

 [The Epicurean "Method of Analogy" in Philodemus, And Its Vital Importance to Us](#) What do we do when we are confronted by differences of opinion among people who believe very strongly in their ideals, even though those ideals vary tremendously from person to...

 ["This Week In Epicurean Philosophy"](#) For the last several years (one hundred and twenty five weeks, to be exact) I have been producing a short weekly summary of notable links and discussions on the Facebook...

 ["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...

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!**

**= = = = = NOTES = = = = =**

*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

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/27-historical-records-from-the-epicurean-philosophy-facebook-group/?postID=95#post95>

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](#).

This email newsletter is brought to you by NewEpicurean.com. Copies of these posts, and a current list of links to active Epicurean websites can also be found at [EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com](#).