

# High Water Mark of The Epicurean Movement In The Ancient World : October 3, 42 BC

Post by "Cassius" of September 4, 2019 at 8:38 AM



Just for fun I thought it would be interesting to the Epicurean movement in the ancient world. I have a nomination, even down to the day: October 3, 42 BC.

The reason I suggest that day is that this is the day that Gaius Cassius Longinus, a self-proclaimed Epicurean, was defeated at the Battle of Philippi.

Up until the moment of defeat, according to my understanding of the history, the world had

advanced to the place where:

1. There was continuing existence of the original school of Epicurus in Athens, and presumably all of Greece and much of the Greek-influenced East had significant Epicurean presence.
2. According to Cicero, Epicurean philosophy had "taken Italy by storm."
3. Epicurean Philosophy was so widely regarded that Cicero felt obliged to devote a large section of his work "On Ends" to describing and opposing it.
4. Cicero's best friend (Titus Atticus Pomponius) and leading citizen of Rome was an Epicurean.
5. Julius Caesar, leading citizen of Rome and temporary dictator, had Epicurean viewpoints on certain subjects, if not an Epicurean himself (or at least he was accused of this during the Cataline conspiracy).
6. Julius Caesar's father in law was the prominent Epicurean Piso, owner of what is now known as the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum.
7. Popular works by Catus, Amafinius, Rabirius, and others were circulating in the Roman world.
8. People later to become Epicurean-inspired poets like Horace and Virgil were on their way up in life.
9. Lucretius had written and published "De Rerum Natura."
10. Cassius Longinus had publicly converted to Epicurean philosophy, and we know other Roman generals, including Panza, had also done so.

11. Philodemus of Gadara, and others, were at working continuing to spread Epicurean philosophy.

Had the battle of Philippi been won by Cassius Longinus (as a result of a better performance by Brutus, who was not the same level of military leader as was Cassius), then the Roman world would have been:

1. Led by a Consul who was a self-proclaimed Epicurean.
2. The school of Epicurus and the spread of Epicurean philosophy would have likely gained official sanction and therefore wider adoption.

Instead, with the Senatorial forces suppressed after the result of the Roman Civil War was complete:

1. Octavian / Augustus clamped down on private associations in Rome (which is significant if we presume that any organized Epicurean movements were private associations).
2. The Empire consolidated power and the social climate became significantly more concerned with duty and obedience and sacrifice for the state than ever before.

Let me know your thoughts on this suggestion, as well as alternatives.

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## **Post by “Joshua” of September 7, 2019 at 12:34 AM**

I became rather taken with this idea, Cassius! This and your other thread on the destruction of Rome seemed to plant a seed in my head.

### **Song of the Sage**

*In imitation of Tolkien*

The world was old, and ruined walls  
Had told the tale of countless falls,  
Unnumbered tears, and silent bones  
In buried graves and catacombs  
Of cities dead when Rome was young;  
When Troy was lost, and poets sung.  
Alone the Evening Star gave light

When Epicurus rose by night.  
Alone he trod on grassy leas  
And scanned for Law in changing seas;  
He grappled Chaos to the hilt  
And knew it for the lies it built;  
He wrung the truth from every blade  
That turned beneath his mental spade;  
The secret, deep and unalloyed,  
Of atoms bound in endless void!  
And when he raised at last his eyes  
Upon the splendid starlit skies,  
He laughed to think of Plato's chimes  
And probed the deeps of space and time.  
And where the priests saw godly powers  
He saw ten thousand earths like ours!  
Nor could the courage of his soul  
Be daunted by its mortal toll.  
The light that rose upon that morn  
For seven centuries was borne;  
Does it rest too beneath the hill?  
I cannot tell; I cannot tell.  
On Turkish shores the carven stone  
Still whispers in a dulcet tone,  
And Roman scrolls in Vulcan's cache  
Still slumber in the mountain ash.

But there, outshining all the rest,  
Still Venus lingers in the West.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 7, 2019 at 5:25 AM**

Excellent Joshua! Great content, smooth wording, never sacrificing clarity for the sake of elegance but always elegant too!

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### **Post by “Elayne” of September 7, 2019 at 6:55 AM**

Love that! I first read LOTR when I was 10, and through my teens I read it several more times.

If I were a fiction writer, I'd write a "quest" book like that with the heroes as a band of Epicurean friends, fighting off Stoic trolls, etc.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 7, 2019 at 7:21 AM**

That would be great too, and possibly more effective than other ways of spreading the message.

As doe me I never read any of the books but was very impressed by the movies. (Only saw the first three)

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### **Post by “Joshua” of September 7, 2019 at 7:53 AM**

I was totally obsessed with Tolkien when I was a teenager. Middle Earth is in many ways my "first language" when it comes to things like mortality, beauty, friendship, wisdom, and struggle. It's a world I still slip into whenever I walk in quiet woods.

There are chanted versions of *The Song of Durin* to be found. A very haunting hymn.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1152-high-water-mark-of-the-epicurean-movement-in-the-ancient-world-october-3-42-bc/>