

A Reddit Exchange With Comments

Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2019 at 8:02 PM

Nate had such good pithy material here in [this Reddit thread](#) that I wanted to preserve the core of Nate's comments here:

N: I submit that the greatest superstition promoted today is Monotheism. The weather witches are those who offer thoughts and prayers instead of actionable change.

Poster: And what do you offer?

N: *I offer friendship! I offer my energy and resources to solve problems, rather than ignore them, or hide from the responsibility of engaging the natural world. I offer an invitation to abandon a desert of superstitious shadows and religious mirages to an oasis of pleasure. I offer encouragement to employ reason, and to forsake the fear of death that leads the fearful to retreat to sedation and intellectual paralysis.*

Within the context of Epicurean philosophy, the offering is a philosophy of pleasure, an ethics of hedonism, a physics of materialism, and an epistemology of empiricism. Instead of ineffectual prayers, and powerless thoughts, Epicurean philosophy offers a potent, reliable path that employs sensation to understand nature, feeling to understand ourselves, and anticipations to effectively navigate reality.

Poster: I hear you but you got a lot to mature on. You sound like a religious fanatic, bringing down other faiths and things that works for other people because of your own personal belief. For that person, thoughts and prayers means a lot - and truly, who are you to tell that person otherwise? Also, if theres a problem - people aren't just gonna say thoughts and prayers. That usually happens when they have no direct control or involvement, like a school shooting or the deaths of someone. Things are much deeper than what you projected here.

N: *I hear you, but you got a lot to mature on. You sound like an uncertain skeptic, tolerating irrational faiths and dangerous superstitions that other people falsely claim to help them based on your perspective. For some people, thoughts and prayers take the place of confronting reality with bravery and courage - and, truly, who are you encourage other human beings to abandon their natural ability to reason and, instead, reinforce risky, superstitious thinking? People often just say thoughts and prayers, and it is futile. Things are much deeper than what you projected here.*

Nate also posted this at FB in conjunction with a link to the Reddit exchange:

Hiram brought this up months ago - I just joined Reddit, and have been participating in the pre-existing 'Epicureanism' subreddit (it's been around for about 5 years). I thought it might be a reasonable place to engage a different crowd.

I'm finding that it draws a lot of attention from Eclecticists, spiritualists, and non-Epicureans looking to promote the over-used idea that we shouldn't judge other philosophical systems in the name of 'respecting' everyone (and their harmful ideologies).

In the attached threat, I offered a polemic against monotheism, and superstitious thinking, and, in doing so, I was accused of being a "religious fanatic". I'm realizing why [epicureanfriends.com] is a better format for people who want to LEARN ABOUT EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY, and not just debate opinions.

I (Cassius) posted this:

WOW Nate that is a great exchange! Anyone tempted to skip over it because the text is small, I hope you'll zoom in and read the details of Nate's posts! And thank you for all you do! So you "sound like a religious fanatic" do you? I guess you are supposed to fall in line with the emotionless zombies who want you to think that nothing matters and that you should just retire to your cave pending your final departure from this veil of tears.... Argh. I would like to think that numbers of Epicureans came to your defense there, but the bitter truth is that we are woefully outnumbered and therefore have to stick together on the big stuff when at all possible.

And I should specially thank you for the kind comment on Epicureanfriends.com I intend to see that that forum is curated indefinitely into the future as an intellectually challenging and yet "safe space" for those of us who are on basically the same page and want to grow together. Social media has been a great tool for meeting new people we'd never meet otherwise, but it's necessary for mental health reasons to keep a tight watch on it. Reddit seems to be - if possible - an even more rough-and-tumble environment. We need our own spaces where we build constructively for the future, and hopefully Epicureanfriends will over time be joined by many others.

Post by "Charles" of September 29, 2019 at 11:32 AM

I've thought about bringing discussion to the Epicurean subreddit, but the bulk of its users seem to be (like you said): spiritualists, eclecticists, and non-Epicureans, the most widely spread post is the so-called "Epicurean paradox".

It's a bit of a shame as I would like to see it flourish like r/stoicism as reddit is much more accessible compared to a great number of other sites. Maybe some integration is in order?

Post by “Cassius” of September 29, 2019 at 11:52 AM

I plan to try to get over there more often, but it's a problem of (1) lack of resources, and (2) motivation. Reddit is much more like a gladiator school where there is constant confrontation and fighting. That can be good motivation for producing new content, but in the end we have to decide how much time to spend opposing people who are never going to be on "our side" vs. building our own team. EpicureanFriends is *our* team - the Reddit subgroups are not set up to be for the benefit of, or (to my observation) run by, people who hold to a non-Stoicized version of Epicurus.

And the non-Stoicized version of Epicurus is essentially the Ciceronian / Plutarchian criticism of Epicurus melded with an "apology" for Epicurus. Their position is that Epicurus fully defined pleasure as "absence of pain," and that once you understand that what Epicurus was really after was "tranquility" rather than "pleasure" you will see that Epicurus was as much of a virtue-ethicist as any Stoic or Platonist.

It is one of the hardest realizations to accept, but I am thoroughly convinced that there will always be "sides" and "teams" on these issues. We have to accept that not everyone is going to agree with us, nor is it productive for us to try to change the minds of our opponents after a certain point.

Recalling what Frances Wright had Epicurus say [in Chapter 8 of "A Few Days In Athens"](#) -

Theon: “Then, truly, if the master had such an intention, I am very glad I did not follow him. But I passed the evening at my own lodgings, with my friend Cleanthes.”

Epicurus: “Trying to talk him into good humor and charity, was it?”

Theon: “Something so.”

(Remainder of names are omitted - the flow of conversation continues -)

“And you succeeded ?”

“Verily, I don’t know; he did not leave me in worse humor than he came.”

“Nay, then it must have been in better. Explanation always approaches or widens the differences between friends.”

“Yes, but we also entered into argument.”

“Dangerous ground that, to be sure. And your fight, of course, ended in a drawn battle.”

“You pay me more than a merited compliment, in concluding that to be a thing of course.”

“Nay, your pardon! I pay you any thing but a compliment. It is not that I conclude your rhetoric and your logic equal, but your obstinacy and your vanity.”

“Do you know, I don’t think myself either obstinate or vain,” said Theon, smiling.

“Had I supposed you did, I might not have seen occasion to give you the information.”

“But on what grounds do you think me obstinate and vain?”

“Your years; your years. And do you think there is a man under twenty that is not both?”

“Why, I should think an old man, at least, more obstinate than a young one.”

“I grant you, when he is obstinate, which is pretty often, but not quite always; and when he is vain, the same. But whilst many old men have vanity and obstinacy in the superlative degree, all young men have those qualities in the positive. I believe your share to be tolerably moderate, but do not suppose that you have no share at all. Well, and now tell me, was it not a drawn battle?”

“I confess it was. At least, we neither of us convinced the other.”

“My son, it would have added one more to the seven wonders if you had. I incline to doubt, if two men, in the course of an olympiad, enter on an argument from the honest and single desire of coming at the truth, or if, in the course of a century, one man comes from an argument convinced by his opponent.”

“Well, then, if you will allow me no credit for not being convinced, you may at least for my not being silenced, I, so young an arguer, and Cleanthes so practiced a one!”

Post by “Eikadistes” of September 30, 2019 at 12:45 AM

I received a terse reply:

I said you sound like one [a religious fanatic] not that you are one, important distinction.

Also, do you know history? Do you know the importance of Christianity? It built the western world. It is anything but irrational. I recommend you do some research on the impact of Christianity. You seem to be one of those internet atheists that knows no respect and continously bash other peoples faith, the same faith their ancestors had.

You saying that having a faith means you are unable to reason, are superstitious and have a risky sort of thinking? It seems like you truly don't know what you are talking about. The greatest scientists, philosophers..you name it, was man of faith.

What can a person, a normal person do besides "thoughts and prayers"? Oh a hurricane happened? you want them to send their entire savings to that cause instead? what would you do? donate \$10? oh please. For those saying "thoughts and prayers" it actually means something for them. Of course you wouldn't know that with your 200IQ God of Reason mentality.

I took this as a teaching opportunity, and responded without taking the sarcastic bait:

Quote

"I recommend you do some research ..."

"... you truly don't know what you are talking about."

"Of course you wouldn't know that with your 200IQ God of Reason mentality."

Display More

*It sounds like you're having a really rough time in life. I'm sorry if that is the case! I can certainly empathize. **No worries, though!** Let's turn this into a learning experience!*

Typically, when I start throwing insults at complete strangers, it's because I am dissatisfied with my own circumstances, and am acting irrationally. I think you can benefit from digesting Epicurus' 39th Principle Doctrine. He recommends:

"He who best knew how to meet fear of external foes made into one family all the creatures he could; and those he could not, he at any rate did not treat as aliens; and where he found even this impossible, he avoided all association, and, so far as was useful, kept them at a distance."

*Life is about **pleasure**, and instigating conflict with a complete stranger is a sure way to distance yourself from happiness. If you cannot treat me with decency, then, like I respectfully*

requested before, "**keep it to yourself**".

There is no benefit to making enemies, and even less benefit to instigating conflict with them. If you have decided that I am your antagonist, and cannot treat me with respect, then, like Epicurus suggests, keep me at a distance.

Peace.

Post by "Cassius" of September 30, 2019 at 6:46 AM

And this is the Epicurean subreddit! ?! It is hardly possible to engage the discussion when people approach life from such basically different viewpoints. What does living happily mean to someone who sees life as a matter of serving "God" above all?

Post by "Joshua" of September 30, 2019 at 8:07 AM

Quote

Also, do you know history? Do you know the importance of Christianity? It built the western world.

Grrrr.....☹☹

It slunk like a petty thief into the shadows of the ruins of Ancient Greece, and has the gall to name itself Great. It delivered 14 centuries of stultifying darkness and ignorance, and dares to call itself Light. It kindled for Bruno and all his kind the nightfires of charred and choking death, and promises the water of Life.

It holds in a bold hand the rod of the shepherd, and in a deep sleeve the crooked knife of the abattoir.

It is altogether evil.

Edit; Ah! But I forget myself. I should not name them evil. It is only that all of their works and yearnings weave themselves toward bitter ends, and my complaint is that I am doomed to a

hapless share in the warp and weft.

Post by “Cassius” of September 30, 2019 at 8:29 AM

The intersection of (1) Nietzsche's analysis in ANTICHRIST of Epicurus as combating Christianity before it even existed, with (2) DeWitt's analysis in "St Paul and Epicurus" of several of the "antichrist" references as essentially referring to Epicurus, is something I find extremely interesting and important. As important as I find many other issues in life, I doubt there is any more important than properly diagnosing and combating Judeo-Christian theology.

AntiChrist 58.

In point of fact, the end for which one lies makes a great difference: whether one preserves thereby or destroys. There is a perfect likeness between Christian and anarchist: their object, their instinct, points only toward destruction. One need only turn to history for a proof of this: there it appears with appalling distinctness. We have just studied a code of religious legislation whose object it was to convert the conditions which cause life to flourish into an "eternal" social organization,—Christianity found its mission in putting an end to such an organization, *because life flourished under it*. There the benefits that reason had produced during long ages of experiment and insecurity were applied to the most remote uses, and an effort was made to bring in a harvest that should be as large, as rich and as complete as possible; here, on the contrary, the harvest is blighted overnight... That which stood there *aere perennis*, the *imperium Romanum*, the most magnificent form of organization under difficult conditions that has ever been achieved, and compared to which everything before it and after it appears as patchwork, bungling, diletantism—those holy anarchists made it a matter of "piety" to destroy "the world", *which is to say*, the *imperium Romanum*, so that in the end not a stone stood upon another—and even Germans and other such louts were able to become its masters... The Christian and the anarchist: both are decadents; both are incapable of any act that is not disintegrating, poisonous, degenerating, *blood-sucking*; both have an instinct of *mortal hatred* of everything that stands up, and is great, and has durability, and promises life a future... Christianity was the vampire of the *imperium Romanum*,—overnight it destroyed the vast achievement of the Romans: the conquest of the soil for a great culture *that could await its time*. Can it be that this fact is not yet understood? The *imperium Romanum* that we know, and that the history of the Roman provinces teaches us to know better and better,—this most admirable of all works of art in the grand manner was merely the beginning, and the structure to follow was not to prove its worth for thousands of years. To this day, nothing on a like scale *sub specie aeterni* has been brought into being, or even dreamed of!—This organization was strong enough to withstand bad emperors: the accident of personality has nothing to do with

such things—the first principle of all genuinely great architecture. But it was not strong enough to stand up against the corruptest of all forms of corruption—against Christians... These stealthy worms, which under the cover of night, mist and duplicity, crept upon every individual, sucking him dry of all earnest interest in real things, of all instinct for reality—this cowardly, effeminate and sugar-coated gang gradually alienated all "souls", step by step, from that colossal edifice, turning against it all the meritorious, manly and noble natures that had found in the cause of Rome their own cause, their own serious purpose, their own pride. The sneakishness of hypocrisy, the secrecy of the conventicle, concepts as black as hell, such as the sacrifice of the innocent, the unio mystica in the drinking of blood, above all, the slowly rekindled fire of revenge, of Chandala revenge—all that sort of thing became master of Rome: the same kind of religion which, in a pre-existent form, Epicurus had combatted. One has but to read Lucretius to know what Epicurus made war upon—not paganism, but "Christianity", which is to say, the corruption of souls by means of the concepts of guilt, punishment and immortality.—He combatted the subterranean cults, the whole of latent Christianity—to deny immortality was already a form of genuine salvation.—Epicurus had triumphed, and every respectable intellect in Rome was Epicurean—*when Paul appeared...* Paul, the Chandala hatred of Rome, of "the world", in the flesh and inspired by genius—the Jew, the eternal Jew *par excellence*... What he saw was how, with the aid of the small sectarian Christian movement that stood apart from Judaism, a "world conflagration" might be kindled; how, with the symbol of "God on the cross", all secret seditions, all the fruits of anarchistic intrigues in the empire, might be amalgamated into one immense power. "Salvation is of the Jews."—Christianity is the formula for exceeding and summing up the subterranean cults of all varieties, that of Osiris, that of the GreatMother, that of Mithras, for instance: in his discernment of this fact the genius of Paul showed itself. His instinct was here so sure that, with reckless violence to the truth, he put the ideas which lent fascination to every sort of Chandala religion into the mouth of the "Saviour" as his own inventions, and not only into the mouth—he made out of him something that even a priest of Mithras could understand... This was his revelation at Damascus: he grasped the fact that he needed the belief in immortality in order to rob "the world" of its value, that the concept of "hell" would master Rome—that the notion of a "beyond" is the *death of life*. Nihilist and Christian: they rhyme in German, and they do more than rhyme.

St Paul and Epicurus

...

All the armament of Epicurean logic which had been developed to combat Greek paganism and Platonic idealism was available from the outset for the crusade against the nascent Christianity. This conflict fell chiefly upon Paul, because it was his lot to carry the new gospel to the Greeks. For him the specific task was to build up a new structure of spirituality in the face of an entrenched and confident structure of materialism. It was the logic of the cross against the

logic of the atom, an early phase of the long strife between science and religion. Epicurus himself became a sort of Antichrist.

...

The very first of his Authorized Doctrines declared the gods to be incapable of anger. Anger was a disturbing emotion and a symptom of weakness; to ascribe such an emotion to the gods was to detract from their sanctity and to diminish their claim to the worship of mankind. Upon this worship as embodied in the public festivals, especially the music, he placed supreme importance and among his sayings is one to the effect that "the wise man will derive more enjoyment than other men from the state festivals."

If this elimination of anger from celestial minds was offensive to orthodox pagan Greeks, it was still more so when it became known to orthodox Jews, whose Jehovah bore a unique reputation as a God of wrath. Equally offensive was the removal of the gods from all participation in human affairs, which involved the rejection of belief in divine prophecy, in miracles, and divine providence.

These teachings were judged to cancel all the merit that resided in the demand of Epicurus for more reverence for godhead; they relegated him to the evil eminence of being the archenemy of religion and a sort of Antichrist.

...

In seeking help from Epicurus to explain Paul it deserves also to be brought to knowledge that this procedure involves a shocking rivalry of loyalties. In the Greek language the name Epicurus signifies "helper" or "succorer" and this may account in part for Paul's detestation of it and unwillingness to mention it. To concede to the adversary the title of helper, which by implication belonged to Jesus, was only one degree less repellent than to know that his disciples knew him as a savior, which they did. Epicurus became virtually a sort of Antichrist.

The Prince of the Power of the Air

There was one talent the exercise of which was denied to both Epicurus and Paul. Both were ardent moralists, a noble breed of men but as such forbidden the use of humor. The one form of wit that befitted them was satire, which belittles the competitor and lingers in the memory. Epicurus was a master of it. He dubbed the Platonists as "hangers-on of Dionysus," the god of the theater; he referred to them as "the men who pitch their voices low," as if unemployed actors, would-be Hamlets, as it were, itching for kingly roles. Paul belittled the Epicureans as a Peace-at-any-Price Party or Safety-First Party, designating them by their catchwords Peace and Safety; but his masterpiece of satire is to be found in this Epistle: he satirizes Epicurus as "prince of the power of the air."

...

Peace and Safety

Among the numerous clues that serve to identify references to the Epicureans none is more specific and certain than the mention of their watchwords Peace and Safety. These occur in First Thessalonians 5:3, where the King James Version runs: "For when they shall say, Peace and Safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." This falls far short of exactitude but it is superior to the Revised Standard: "When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them."

The unlucky change from "when they shall say" to "when people say" is based upon the gratuitous assumption that no particular group or sect is being singled out for censure but merely some section of the populace that refuses to be alarmed by the prediction of the second coming and the destruction of unbelievers. The perplexity of translators is due to the fact that catchwords of unmistakable reference in Paul's time have lost their significance through the lapse of the centuries.

No person of ordinary intelligence at the date when the letter was written would have been ignorant that peace and safety were objectives of the Epicurean way of life. Recognition of this fact will enable us to correct the translation. To this end it must be remembered that the second coming and the destruction of unbelievers are events in the future but the threat is present and perpetual. With this knowledge kept well in mind we shall be able to set the tenses to rights: "At the very moment that they are saying 'peace and safety' sudden destruction is hanging over them."

When once this identification of the Epicureans has been made, confirmation will be the more certain in the seemingly innocent words (4:3), "the others who have no hope." This signifies no hope of benefiting by the grace of God and the Epicureans were so characterized even outside of the New Testament by their rivals the Stoics, because they denied divine providence.

Additional confirmation of a new and oblique sort will be found in the Second Epistle, 2:1-12, where the coming of Antichrist is predicted. It has long since been observed that the description admirably fits the character of the notorious Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria and persecutor of the Jews. What has not been so well known is the fact that this king became a convert to the creed of Epicurus and adopted it as the court philosophy. **Thus the ominous inference is forced upon us that Epicureanism is to be associated with Antichrist.**

Post by "Joshua" of September 30, 2019 at 8:45 AM

Quote

To deny immortality was already a form of genuine salvation.

The most subversive idea of all.

Post by “Joshua” of September 30, 2019 at 9:14 AM

Epicurus the Unannointed. Epicurus the Unrisen. The Unprophecied. Epicurus sired of mortals, and alone of mortals reconciled to die. Epicurus who sank in the surf when he trod there, and learned to swim with the current. Who healed mens' minds, and did not pretend to heal their bodies. Who bid us partake of friendship in his memory, and not of blood.

Who taught us to enjoy the water, when we could not get the wine.