

Happy Twentieth of December, 2019

Post by “Cassius” of December 20, 2019 at 9:11 AM

Happy Twentieth of December, 2019, to everyone here! I've opened this subforum where we can post 20th threads each month from here on out. I hope everyone is well and getting ready for a happy holiday season!

Post by “Martin” of December 20, 2019 at 9:46 AM

Happy 20th!

Post by “Joshua” of December 20, 2019 at 9:49 AM

Happy 20th!

I moved to the Emerald Coast of Florida last Wednesday, and I've been rather busy as a full time land-survey rodman, and part-time volunteer farm-hand. Haven't had time for even a line of Lucretius, since the plane out of Sheridan!

Looking forward to a lazy rainy weekend.

Post by “Cassius” of December 20, 2019 at 9:49 AM

This may be a good place to begin to reflect on where we are as 2019 begins to come to a close. I think we've had a pretty active year and are probably ending strong in terms of our general level of activity. I would be interested in any and all assessments of where we are and where we ought to go in the next twelve months, not only in terms of EpicureanFriends.com but also our general activity as Epicurean activists.

Post by “Hiram” of December 20, 2019 at 10:21 AM

Happy 20th - it's been a good "Chinese Year of the Pig" (well, the Chinese year ends in Jan or Feb of next year).

As for SoFE, you [Cassius](#) always wanted us to come up with a clear set of tenets and we were never able to agree on them before, but in the coming days we'll finally be publishing the "20 Tenets of the Society of Epicurus", with cross-references from the sources and essays that have been written on them. There are 5 Canon, 5 Physics, and 10 Ethics tenets, and they're roughly based on my Outline of EP as their first draft. I'm waiting for Jesús to finish the Spanish translation so they will go live on both sites.

<https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/2019/12/20/hap...er-on-autarchy/>

I've also discussed the possibility of translating our YouTube vids into Spanish, but hasn't come to fruition (although it's possible that a change in video settings can automatically create a translation).

Post by “Cassius” of December 20, 2019 at 10:23 AM

I will be looking forward to seeing that Hiram.

Post by “Godfrey” of December 20, 2019 at 11:29 AM

I'm out of commission until the new year. Spending time with in-laws through Christmas (trying not to go mental), taking a family road trip after that.

Happy Twentieth, all!

Post by “Charles” of December 20, 2019 at 11:30 AM

Happy 20th!

I've finished my translation of Mettrie's "The System of Epicurus", and I've found that the most Epicurean it gets is his statements regarding death. But still, what could be expected from an Epicuro-Cartesian? I'll get started on typing up my notes into a google doc when I get home from work and before I head out tonight.

Post by “Charles” of December 20, 2019 at 12:00 PM

Heh, maybe we could call 2020 The Year of Epicurus.

Post by “Cassius” of December 20, 2019 at 1:16 PM

Godfrey, have a safe trip and we look forward to seeing you back soon.

Charles, that sounds like a useful transcription so I look forward to your posting it somewhere where it can be referenced in the future.

Post by “Elayne” of December 21, 2019 at 9:09 AM

Happy day after the 20th, lol. I spent yesterday getting ready for and singing in a Solstice concert. We had a lot of fun!

I think 2020 will be a year of clarification. There are some differing and sometimes incompatible perspectives out there regarding Epicurean philosophy. Some are not challenges to the load-bearing framework of the philosophy but more style preferences (eg, isms or not)-- and others directly weaken or remove key pillars, by inserting incompatible philosophies like Buddhism or social utilitarianisms and idealisms like humanism, or by making abstractions about pleasure. I think it's time to make that clear between groups.

When I read Hiram's recent writing about Buddhist forms of introspection being a way to learn

about the self, for instance, I know clearly that our versions of Epicurean philosophy are different. Buddhists do have some variations, but a core feature is the assertion that by closely introspecting on oneself, a person will experience directly that there is no self and that our ordinary experience of self and reality is a delusion. There are neurologic events that cause this and are related to what the brain does when typical environmental stimuli are removed. A concerning number of people without prior psychiatric disturbances have suffered long lasting dysfunction from this, anything from dissociative symptoms to psychosis.

This kind of activity is in striking contrast to Epicurus' repeated advice to meditate on nature--to study what our sense organs and feelings, as triggered by ordinary interaction with reality, tell us. Not to undo the ordinary workings of the brain, which when functioning in the way it has evolved, is able to choose and plan for pleasure.

I will be interested in seeing the Society of Epicurus' statement. I am expecting it to incorporate elements that I will find to be structurally unsound. If it does not, I will be thrilled!

And those of us who adhere to the classical teachings of Epicurus will continue to clarify our position, sometimes by contrasting it with alternate views, just as Epicurus did.

That is a good thing IMO. People will be more easily able to choose the perspective they prefer.

Post by “Cassius” of December 21, 2019 at 9:58 AM

Yes I very much agree with Elayne's post. If we start off in studying Epicurus with the idea that Epicurus reached absolute conclusions about how to live, based on decisionmaking about pleasure leading to the same conclusions for all, then we are off on the wrong track at the beginning, and the sooner we get off that track the better.

Long before anyone can decide "how" to live they have to make fundamental decisions about the nature of the universe and the nature of humans, including decisions about the existence of a supernatural, about a life after death, and about how to relate abstractions and ideas (the workings of the human mind) to the senses and the other operations of the body.

If Epicurus had concluded that supernatural gods existed, and that those gods offered to opportunity for an eternal life of "happiness" after death, then he would have been the first to embrace the implications of that conclusion and pursued some form of religion as the key to proper living. It is only because his commitment to "the truth" was so strong that he rejected the anesthesia-like pleasure of fantasizing about gods and afterlives and a single way of life for

everyone.

We live in a world where it takes the strength of will of an Epicurus to be willing to stand against the 'universal truths' that are forced on us by peer pressure, and increasingly by force of law. Many people who can read this over the internet are already under the force of law to believe or not believe certain viewpoints. And that means that there is a strong temptation for us to incorporate and hold as a part of Epicurean philosophy points of view that Epicurus himself would never have imagined, and would likely feel disgust a being associated with.

Some of us are not going to be able to stand up to that temptation, and are going to look for common ground between Epicurus and modern attitudes at the expense of fidelity to what Epicurus and the Epicureans actually taught and stood for. And some of us are going to stand more strongly for the classical Epicurean approach and decide not to incorporate those accommodations.

As I see it that means at least two things are going to happen:

(1) We are going to see "interest groups" or simple divisions formed, with people of particular persuasions forming their own Epicurean groups. Although Robert Hanrott's pages are not "groups," he is an example of someone who writes as much or more about "politics" than about Epicurean philosophy, and as a result people who agree with him can work in common with his approach, or other approaches that are similar. I would expect other "interest groups" to form in the future as well, with other political approaches.

(2) I personally am committed to seeing this forum remain dedicated to core Epicurean philosophy, and that will mean (as Elayne says) making clear that it is open to anyone of any political persuasion who wants to learn about the core philosophy, and that it will be not be limited only those whose politics are left, center, or right. We've maintained a very cooperative spirit here in the past and I hope we will continue to do so, but it will also be necessary to be frank about issues that divide us.

As far as I am concerned there is **no** political issue so important that someone holding it cannot at the same time be included within the study of Epicurean philosophy so long as those issues are kept separate and not allowed to be harmful to the goal of Epicurean philosophy. Epicurus did not provide a list of political positions which are "approved" and a list that is "not approved" - and I strongly believe the reason he did not is because the philosophy does not support such absolute political judgments. Everyone is going to have their own personal opinions about such issues, but if they attempt to make a particular position a requirement, or a particular position an absolute bar, then that shows me that they are placing some "ism" or abstract idea above a proper understanding of what Epicurus really taught.

No doubt other unexpected developments will occur, but the bottom line is that it will be for the best for us to sharpen our views on issues even when they reveal divisions and the need for separate "teams" or activities or whatever. It will be for the best if we all advocate our positions as clearly and as strongly as we can, and then we take steps to pursue those positions,

together where possible, separately where necessary. And that's the point I made in the first paragraph - there is no single "political" destination called for in Epicurean philosophy, and that means no single "group" or "project" can ever be considered the last word in Epicurean philosophy.