

## Two Types?

**Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2020 at 12:09 AM**

OK here's my view on the issue, and it turns on this passage from what you wrote: "*acceptable positions for Epicureans to hold.*"

No one really gets to say what an Epicurean is, because Epicurus is dead, and there was no official transmission of authority from him to today. All we can do is say what we think and choose our own personal associations.

Hiram has set up his Society of Epicurus as a specific group. Until recently he has never had a specific list of statements as to what viewpoints the group should promote. It's his group and it's entirely appropriate for him to list whatever viewpoints he wants to pursue, so our discussion here should in no way be interpreted as trying to fight with Hiram or limit his freedom of action. He can adopt whatever views he likes, and people can decide whether they wish to participate based on their own personal preferences.

The same goes for here at Epicureanfriends.com. We're not a membership organization in the same sense as a "Society," but in launching the website those of us who are moderators need to make decisions as to what limits should be imposed on the discussions. The "Not Neo" list is exactly that - it's an attempt to define what views we want to see promoted here, and what views we're not comfortable with and prefer to see promoted elsewhere.

Hiram seeks to cast a wider tent, this group is erecting a narrower tent, one that is focused more on viewpoints that the moderators here believe to be more accurate to Epicurus. In many cases (not all) that regularly means that the views here are those that derive from Norman DeWitt's viewpoint, while Hiram's tent is more oriented toward the academic mainstream.

As far as I am concerned there's no personal hard feelings between the two camps, and everyone can choose what they wish and have my best wishes. But here at Epicureanfriends I / we are going to draw a line at some point so that our position is not numerically overwhelmed as it is in Academia, and so the people who believe that they can profit from this approach can associate with each other in productive peace.

So the Society of Epicurus can decide that there are three acceptable positions on gods, or 30, but that has no bearing on what those of us who are moderators at Epicureanfriends.com will decide is appropriate for promotion here. Discussion is one thing; promotion is something else, and Hiram is taking the Society of Epicurus in the direction of promoting certain viewpoints that are not consistent with the DeWitt model of Epicurus, which is the model that's going to be the guiding force behind this website, as explained in the terms of use and other postings about the

purpose of the website.

No hard feelings are involved in any of these decisions; everyone has to decide what views they are comfortable in promoting. In the end, neither the School of Epicurus, this website, or the Society of Epicurus (as far as I can tell) is a democracy, nor should we wish to be. The Epicurean goal is Pleasure / Happiness, not any variation of politics such as democracy, and so I don't think we at Epicureanfriends.com should be in the business of deciding what views are acceptable for "an Epicurean" to hold. We're only in the business of deciding what is acceptable for this website to promote.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2020 at 4:15 AM**

i just noticed this: "Another issue is that I derive happiness from thinking about the creator(s) of the universe; as Epicurus intended for us."

The "as Epicurus intended for us" in regard to creators of the universe is not consistent with the clear point of the texts. Epicurus thought adamantly that the universe does not have a creator. Which is not at all to say anything negative about Oscar, but to observe that he holds a nonEpicurean position presuming I understand that correctly. So the issue becomes does that exclude Oscar from posting here? Of course not, but what it would do, over time, if Oscar wanted to launch a series of arguments over an extended period that Epicurean philosophy should be modified to call for a supernatural universe creator, we would find a way to call a halt to posts advocating that campaign here on this website.

And to continue the comparison, if Hiram wants to say that the membership list of S of E allows people who advocate supernatural creators, then that is up to the S of E to decide, and people can join the S of E or not accordingly.

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### **Post by "Elayne" of January 10, 2020 at 7:16 AM**

Oscar, the idea of creators is not c/w "nothing comes from nothing", because then the creators would have come from nothing.

If the creators were themselves material, then they did not create the particles they came from.

They could not create themselves, because they'd have to have existed before material reality-- and that's supernatural. You would then have to explain how those particles came about.

You could imagine that they created other things and beings, but where did they get the raw material? They could not create it from nothing. Humans can move dirt around and even clone animals or do genetic engineering-- we create in many senses, but we do not create anything from nothing.

So there is no possible way for material beings to have created the universe from scratch.

The other option is supernatural. So then you have non material gods producing matter from nothing, which violates the nothing comes from nothing observation. And how would a nonmaterial being interact with matter? What's the interface, which would have to be present to both non-material and material beings? Woowoo folks say energy, but energy is part of the material universe. It's material. Then you'd have to loop around to the beginning and say where did the energy come from? The gods could not have created energy from nothing either!

The creator idea is one of the easiest to remove if you agree that matter/energy can't come from nothing.

Which means if you believe the universe had creators, you do not accept that nothing comes from nothing.

I am not like Cassius on this point, in that I do think there are beliefs that make a person not Epicurean. If we obtained firm evidence that something can come from nothing, which requires supernatural/non material action, I think that would unravel his philosophy. It would mean there is a whole non material realm which not only exists but which can create and mess with matter. It would mean we can't know there's no absolute perspective or ethics, because supernatural beings, as outside the material universe, could have a view of the whole from the outside that we can never have. I feel confident in saying that is not Epicurean.

These are the inevitable implications of nothing comes from nothing. I encourage you to become firm on that point, because if you don't, you are faced with supernaturalism.

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2020 at 8:11 AM**

### [Quote from Elayne](#)

I am not like Cassius on this point, in that I do think there are beliefs that make a person not Epicurean.

As I see it, Elayne and I are not very far apart on this point. As I see it the only distinction in our positions is that I try to be very contextual and define "for what purpose" when I talk about something being Epicurean or not, such as "for purposes of the S of E" or "for purposes of posting on Epicureanfriends. Elayne is certainly approaching it correctly, however, from my point of view, in working toward a standard list of attributes for what "Epicurean" means, just like we use words in any general context. And from that general point of view my conclusion is that the texts are very clear that it Epicurus held it to be central to his philosophy to accept the position that the universe was never created by any supernatural forces / god, for the reasons Elayne states above. In fact so central that the issue of where the universe came from and his dismissal of "chaos" as an acceptable answer is what launched his philosophy career in the first place.

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### **Post by “Hiram” of January 10, 2020 at 8:53 AM**

#### [Quote from Oscar](#)

Now, do I think a personal God(s) exists? No. Do I think there's an afterlife judgment awaiting us all? No. My point of contention with the Atheists rests on my belief that nothing comes from nothing - one of the central and fundamental Epicurean doctrines about the nature of the universe. Another issue is that I derive happiness from thinking about the creator(s) of the universe; as Epicurus intended for us. Others may not and that's okay, I've no issue with that - to each their own.

this is the idealist view, except that the [Epicurean gods](#) were not creators, they were created by nature.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2020 at 8:57 AM**

#### [Quote from Hiram](#)

this is the idealist view, except that the [Epicurean gods](#) were not creators, they were created by nature.

Not to be argumentative - but it would be helpful for me to point out that this is an example of a difference in approach that I have with Hiram. As far as I know, there is no "idealist view" or "realist view" well defined anywhere outside our current discussion. As far as I am concerned Hiram is welcome to coin a term for his own or S of E use, but I find it confusing to talk as if the term has a recognized meaning that you can look up in the dictionary, or in Cicero, or in some recognized authority. And the ambiguity here is that I cannot tell if Oscar is saying that he believes gods of any kind exist -- elsewhere I see reference that maybe he thinks a god or gods created the universe - and so I just don't think it is helpful to prematurely affix a label on a position that seems amorphous at the moment, and that contains elements that seem to accept some aspects of physical "gods" while rejecting others, especially without strict agreed-upon neutral and findable definitions for what that label means and how the position fits within it.

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### Post by “Hiram” of January 10, 2020 at 10:27 AM

So if the realist and idealist positions do not exist outside of this forum, I guess my question is what do you make of all the sources cited in the Epicureanism piece on Wikipedia, for instance?

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The manner in which the [Epicurean gods](#) exist is still disputed. Some scholars say that Epicureanism believes that the gods exist outside the mind as material objects (the realist position), while others assert that the gods only exist in our minds as ideals (the idealist position).[\[36\]\[37\]\[38\]](#) The realist position holds that Epicureans understand the gods as existing as physical and immortal beings made of atoms that reside somewhere in reality.[\[36\]\[38\]](#) However, the gods are completely separate from the rest of reality; they are uninterested in it, play no role in it, and remain completely undisturbed by it.[\[39\]](#) Instead, the gods live in what is called the *metakosmia*, or the space between worlds.[\[40\]](#) Contrarily, the idealist position holds that Epicurus did not actually conceive of the gods as existing in reality. Rather, Epicurus is said to have viewed the gods as just idealized forms of the best human life,[\[37\]\[41\]](#) and it is thought that the gods were emblematic of the life one should aspire towards.[\[37\]](#) The debate between these two positions was revived by A. A. Long and David Sedley in their 1987 book, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, in which the two argued in favor of the idealist position.[\[37\]\[38\]](#) While a scholarly consensus has yet to be reached, the realist position remains the prevailing viewpoint at this time.[\[37\]\[38\]](#)

(and here are sources for notes 36 through 41:)

- ^ [Jump up to: a b c](#) O'Keefe, Tim (2010). *Epicureanism*. University of California Press. pp. 155-156.
- ^ [Jump up to: a b c d e](#) Sedley, David (2011). "Epicurus' theological innatism". In Fish, Jeffrey; Sanders, Kirk R. (eds.). *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. pp. 29-30.
- ^ [Jump up to: a b c d](#) Konstan, David (2011). "Epicurus on the gods". In Fish, Jeffrey; Sanders, Kirk R. (eds.). *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. pp. 53-54.
- ^ Mansfeld, Jaap (1993). "Aspects of Epicurean Theology". *Mnemosyne*. **46** (2): 176-178.
- ^ Buchheit, Vinzenz (2007). "Epicurus' Triumph of the Mind". In Gale, Monica R. (ed.). *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Lucretius*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. pp. 110-111.
- ^ O'Keefe, Tim (2010). *Epicureanism*. University of California Press. pp. 158-159.

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2020 at 11:17 AM

### [Quote from Hiram](#)

, I guess my question is what do you make of all the sources cited in the Epicureanism piece on Wikipedia, for instance

Wikipedia helps, certainly, but I would have to look at that in detail to see who wrote that wikipedia article and its history in order to really comment. Maybe these terms are part of recent scholarship, but I am much more comfortable citing long-established figures in the 2000+ year history of commentary on Epicurus, and if those categories exist in that literature I am not aware of it. I am aware that academics like to coin new terms and cite each other in their articles, but I think it is much more useful to describe the relevant positions by listing them clearly and concisely. Assigning labels frequently ends up obscuring rather than explaining what is being discussed.

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2020 at 11:47 AM

### [Quote from Oscar](#)

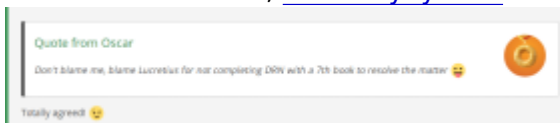
Don't blame me, blame Lucretius for not completing DRN with a 7th book to resolve the matter 😊

Totally agreed! 😊

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2020 at 4:17 PM

Here's a litmus test, [Mike Anyayahan](#) :



If someone is so tightly wound that they can't laugh at a joke like that, then they might claim to belong to a super-fundamentalist Epicurean sect!

BUT --- if they did claim such, I would say that they were NOT really Epicurean, because I do not hesitate to label someone who as no sense of humor as NON-Epicurean!

Two examples of an Epicurean speaking "with a smile" --

On Ends Book 1 -

I had spoken rather with the intention of drawing out Torquatus than of delivering a discourse of my own. But Triarius interposed, **with a smile**: “Why, you have practically expelled Epicurus altogether from the philosophic choir. What have you left to him except that, whatever his style may be, you find his meaning intelligible? His doctrines in Natural Philosophy were second-hand, and in your opinion unsound at that; and his attempts to improve on his authority only made things worse. Dialectic he had none. His identification of the Chief Good with pleasure in the first place was in itself an error, and secondly this also was not original; for it had been said before, and said better, by Aristippus. To crown all you added that Epicurus was a person of no education.”

On Ends Book 2 -

“I am at no loss for authorities,” said Torquatus, “to whom to refer your arguments. I might be able to do some execution myself, but I prefer to find better equipped champions.” “No doubt you allude to our excellent and learned friends Siro and Philodemus.” “You are right,” he replied. “Very well then,” said I; “but it would be fairer to let Triarius pronounce some verdict on our dispute.” “I formally object to him as prejudiced,” **he rejoined with a smile**, “at all events

on this issue. You have shown us some mercy, but Triarius lays about him like a true Stoic.”

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It would only make sense that Epicurus would have liked to joke and have fun - which is probably something that needs to be considered in evaluating what his enemies reported him as saying at times, or even things he himself wrote at times.

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### **Post by “Elayne” of January 10, 2020 at 8:10 PM**

Oscar, I am confused about your creator gods. The universe means "everything that exists"--- all the matter and energy. I'm glad you are not saying they are supernatural, but how can you say they are creators if they didn't bring any matter into existence that wasn't there before? When someone says gods created the universe, I don't think I'm being strange to understand that as it is usually meant.

Is is more like you see them as re-arrangers of matter that was already here-- creative like artists?

As far as the Big Bang, I am not a physicist but I thought there was still something preceding it-- some point of energy that expanded. Not a god sized hole though.

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### **Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 11, 2020 at 1:53 AM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

If someone is so tightly wound that they can't laugh at a joke like that, then they might claim to belong to a super-fundamentalist Epicurean sect!

lol Humor is the name of the game for me. If the poets of antiquity were melancholic, my poetry is humor. This is why I tell my friends to eat cheese instead of saying cheese when they ask my to take a picture on them. 😊

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### **Post by “Elayne” of January 11, 2020 at 8:20 AM**

Oscar, I am going to request a favor. It is very hard to converse if you introduce unconventional definitions into a discussion. The rest of us were having a conversation about something specific, Epicurus' description of gods, and our takes on that. You commented that you were not an atheist and got pleasure from thinking about the creators of the universe, plural, which does not imply nature. Lucretius personifies nature, but it's a poetic device-- nature is not conscious or a being. Epicurus' gods were actual beings, conscious.

And now you say you are using nature interchangeably with creators and gods, which the rest of us were discussing as possible conscious beings or not ("not" being the atheist position even towards material blissful beings).

If nature, not a being, not conscious, is interchangeable for you with creators and gods as material blissful beings, then how is this not using a metaphor to say you are atheist towards material blissful beings? If non being equals being, how can any of us understand you or respond?

Please try harder to communicate clearly, so the rest of us can understand you. Thank you!

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### **Post by "Elli" of January 11, 2020 at 8:27 AM**

[Oscar](#) hello ! Sorry, but you're wrong to call gods as creators. Gods are not creators, since they are created by the nature of mankind who in difficult and painful situations want something as an imitation/prototype for the purpose to be strengthened. Metaphorically this imitation sometimes is a kind of a life jacket when you see life as a vast ocean with huge waves that coming against you to drown you inside its abyss. But as Nietzsche said, it is not wise to look at the abyss, because you'll become the abyss yourself.

But anyway, except for food and drink, mankind wanted and still wants a kind of mental inspiration that is a kind of energy/power to overcome the feeling of insecurity, in other words, a feeling that humans are so tiny in front of the phenomena of Nature. Mankind felt and still feels "shock and awe" in front of the phenomena of Nature and this feeling of insecure is overcoming when we see that we belong into something that is producing in us feelings of **security**. That "belonging" is called "**society**" that includes ourselves and other similar to ourselves that is our family and then our friends and the known to our friends etc. A society's cohesion is based on social contracts with laws, customs, language, religion etc i.e. same historical past, present, and a visualization of the future experiences and with these common experiences we are united with others to overcome any painful situation.

The sadness and melancholy in front of the fact that one day definitely and irrevocably we will perish into the big **Nothingness** provoked and still provokes feelings of melancholy and depression to us the humans. And this is our difference from other beings/animals that as we know already, they did and still do not create images/idols of gods, since they have not the same consciousness and sense perception with us that one day they will die for going into that **"Never again"**. This is our difference from other beings that **can't visualize/imagine** themselves into the future. To live and visualize yourself as a god living in a society of men that everyone has the power living as such, it is what Epicurus and epicureans proclaim with the whole of our philosophy, and imo this is our visualization as intuitive future pleasures that came from past, and present pleasurable experiences.

However, some would say this is idealism and **utopia** (i.e no place) for living like a god among men and no one and anything to interrupt your friendships for living pleasantly. No, I respond to them this is called **"eutopia"** (i.e. good place). And this "eutopia" is given in the ending paragraph of Diogenis of Oinoanda's inscription, and reveals the power of **"swerve"**. Some would say that it is inconceivable for mankind to live as Homo-deus on this planet... humankind is going to extinct. No, I would respond to those **"pessimistic personalities"**, the inconceivable remains as such when nobody and no one conceives/says/proclaims to the others an idea, as a **probability that is pleasurable indeed**, that in the future could become as another **"reality"**. There are many pessimistic personalities who the only thing that they try to do is to maintain/preserve a **"stable present reality"** that has no fields of energy that is the power of motion that creates/changes all the things. Their "stable present reality" has only frames that those frames include **"stable pictures"** without **motion**. Many times, we see, that this "present reality" is maintained as such with laws that are **harmful for the majority of people**. There is a greek idiom that old people here say : **"we found all things as such, and as such we should have to maintain them for ever and ever"**. These forces are the forces of convenience and apathy with such people that do not want to change anything around, since they are afraid the changing itself. But it is obvious that things by Nature are changing without end.

Thus, Epicurus and epicureans are the artists of life who were the first that conceived and with their mind/wise thoughts and with their experiences/actions the **conceivable** which is **the Art to live like gods among men in any society/environment**. And that is because Epicureans are the **adaptable** since they have sharp senses and feelings for observing and explaining the phenomena of Nature in any environment, and through the methodology of the Canon, are doing their measurements to change whatever is against our goal that is **PLEASURE**.