

Epicurean substitute for prayer

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 25, 2020 at 11:52 PM

I have a toddler who has a going-to-bed-routine that now involves prayer. The reasons for why this is are rather complex for me to explain here, but it shall suffice to say that it's a deeply ingrained custom.

The prayers are catholic, since this is the religion we were brought up with; I don't feel comfortable making him repeat every night a prayer asking for permission to go to sleep to a non existing being and to thank another for guarding him during day and night.

Since I didn't have a better option, and thinking I'd have opportunity to fix this later on, I let it slip for a while, but now I'm thinking I should stop it early on.

I say I didn't have a better option because I do believe that this ritual puts him in the right state of mind to go to sleep, so I do think having something to reflect upon, and repeat, would be valuable; it's the content of what he's repeating I'm having trouble with.

During my stoic phase I substituted the prayers, with a phrase I took from reading Marcus Aurelius, which goes something like this: “everything suits me that suits your designs oh universe, nothing comes to early or too late but in your own good time oh nature; everything comes from you, everything persists in you, and to you, all things return”

It seems pretty innocuous and neutral, with no supernatural elements except for perhaps the “design” part of it... I think it is better than the catholic ones, but not good enough yet.

Are there any epicurean sayings that you could recommend that could work for this?

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2020 at 7:01 AM

That's a great question. Here are some first off the cuff thoughts.

One thing that immediately comes to mind and was apparently memorized would be perhaps the first five or so [principal doctrines](#).

Another would be an excerpt from one of the opening sections of the six books of Lucretius. Of these:

1. Maybe most obvious would be from book one, and for this purpose, pure "ring," I have always preferred the Humphries version:

1. When human life, all too conspicuous,
Lay foully groveling on earth, weighed down
By grim Religion looming from the skies,
Horribly threatening mortal men, a man,
A Greek, first raised his mortal eyes
Bravely against this menace. No report
Of gods, no lightning-flash, no thunder-peal
Made this man cower, but drove him all the more
With passionate manliness of mind and will
To be the first to spring the tight-barred gates
Of Nature's hold asunder. So his force,
His vital force of mind, a conqueror
Beyond the flaming ramparts of the world
Explored the vast immensities of space
With wit and wisdom, and came back to us
Triumphant, bringing news of what can be
And what cannot, limits and boundaries,
The borderline, the bench mark, set forever.
Religion, so, is trampled underfoot,
And by his victory we reach the stars.

2. These sections from Torquatus in "On Ends" have potential to be edited into something usable

1. The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement.
2. The great disturbing factor in a man's life is ignorance of good and evil; mistaken ideas about these frequently rob us of our greatest pleasures, and torment us with the most cruel pain of mind. Hence we need the aid of Wisdom, to rid us of our fears and appetites, to root out all our errors and prejudices, and to serve as our infallible guide to the attainment of pleasure. Wisdom alone can banish sorrow from our hearts and protect its front alarm and apprehension; put yourself to school with

her, and you may live in peace, and quench the glowing flames of desire. For the desires are incapable of satisfaction; they ruin not individuals only but whole families, nay often shake the very foundations of the state. It is they that are the source of hatred, quarreling, and strife, of sedition and of war. Nor do they only flaunt themselves abroad, or turn their blind onslaughts solely against others; even when prisoned within the heart they quarrel and fall out among themselves; and this cannot but render the whole of life embittered. Hence only the Wise Man, who prunes away all the rank growth of vanity and error, can possibly live untroubled by sorrow and by fear, content within the bounds that nature has set.

3. Here is indeed a royal road to happiness—open, simple, and direct! For clearly man can have no greater good than complete freedom from pain and sorrow coupled with the enjoyment of the highest bodily and mental pleasures. Notice then how the theory embraces every possible enhancement of life, every aid to the attainment of that Chief Good which is our object. Epicurus, the man whom you denounce as a voluptuary, cries aloud that no one can live pleasantly without living wisely, honorably, and justly, and no one wisely, honorably, and justly without living pleasantly. For a city rent by faction cannot prosper, nor a house whose masters are at strife; much less then can a mind divided against itself and filled with inward discord taste any particle of pure and liberal pleasure. But one who is perpetually swayed by conflicting and incompatible counsels and desires can know no peace or calm.
4. On the other hand, without a full understanding of the world of nature it is impossible to maintain the truth of our sense-perceptions. Further, every mental presentation has its origin in sensation: so that no certain knowledge will be possible, unless [all sensations are true](#), as the theory of Epicurus teaches that they are. Those who deny the validity of sensation and say that nothing can be perceived, having excluded the evidence of the senses, are unable even to expound their own argument. Besides, by abolishing knowledge and science they abolish all possibility of rational life and action. Thus Natural Philosophy supplies courage to face the fear of death; resolution to resist the terrors of religion; peace of mind, for it removes all ignorance of the mysteries of nature; self-control, for it explains the nature of the desires and distinguishes their different kinds; and, as I showed just now, the Canon or Criterion of Knowledge, which Epicurus also established, gives a method of discerning truth from falsehood.
5. If then the doctrine I have set forth is clearer and more luminous than daylight itself; if it is derived entirely from Nature's source; if my whole discourse relies throughout for confirmation on the unbiased and unimpeachable evidence of the senses; if lisping infants, nay even dumb animals, prompted by Nature's teaching, almost find voice to proclaim that there is no welfare but pleasure, no hardship but pain—and their judgment in these matters is neither sophisticated nor biased—ought we not to feel the greatest gratitude to him who caught this utterance of Nature's voice, and grasped its import so firmly and so fully that he

has guided all sane-minded men into the paths of peace and happiness, calmness and repose? You are pleased to think him uneducated. The reason is that he refused to consider any education worth the name that did not help to school us in happiness. Was he to spend his time, as you encourage Triarius and me to do, in perusing poets, who give us nothing solid and useful, but merely childish amusement? Was he to occupy himself like Plato with music and geometry, arithmetic and astronomy, which starting from false premises cannot be true, and which moreover if they were true would contribute nothing to make our lives pleasanter and therefore better? Was he, I say, to study arts like these, and neglect the master art, so difficult and correspondingly so fruitful, the art of living? No! Epicurus was not uneducated: the real philistines are those who ask us to go on studying till old age the subjects that we ought to be ashamed not to have learnt in boyhood.

3. There are probably sections from Frances Wright that ring almost as poetry;
 1. I will have to think of appropriate sections and add them here
4. And this from Thomas Jefferson's letter to **John Adams, August 15, 1820:**

'I feel: therefore I exist.' I feel bodies which are not myself: there are other existencies then. I call them *matter*. I feel them changing place. This gives me motion. Where there is an absence of matter, I call it *void*, or *nothing*, or *immaterial space*. On the basis of sensation, of matter and motion, we may erect the fabric of all the certainties we can have or need. I can conceive *thought* to be an action of a particular organisation of matter, formed for that purpose by it's creator, as well as that *attraction* in an action of matter, or *magnetism* of loadstone. When he who denies to the Creator the power of endowing matter with the mode of action called *thinking* shall shew how he could endow the Sun with the mode of action called *attraction*, which reins the planets in the tract of their orbits, or how an absence of matter can have a will, and, by that will, put matter into motion, then the materialist may be lawfully required to explain the process by which matter exercises the faculty of thinking. When once we quit the basis of sensation, all is in the wind. To talk of *immaterial* existences is to talk of *nothings*. To say that the human soul, angels, god, are immaterial, is to say they are *nothings*, or that there is no god, no angels, no soul. I cannot reason otherwise.

Post by "Don" of August 26, 2020 at 7:22 AM

Ah, toddlers! I fondly remember nighttime going to bed "rituals". One of ours was reading short books, mostly by Sandra Boynton, especially the *Going To Bed Book*. I can still repeat it after oh my... Well over a decade now! Time flies! Enjoy your child every step of the way!

It might be helpful to know the specific prayer your toddler enjoys saying. I know the one I would say when I was **very** young was traumatizing to think of now, including ..."if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

I think a toddler is too young for the Tetrpharmakos. And besides it also introduces death, do I'd steer away from that for now.

I don't have any specific saying of Epicurus or Lucretius right now, but one option might be focusing on gratitude. What are you most thankful for today? Or come up with a rote litany like a prayer: I'm thankful for ... And... And...

Or pleasure. What made you the happiest today? Let your toddler reflect on what makes them happy throughout that day. Or again let them come up with a rote list and make that into a "prayer."

There might also be something about Nature you could use.

This is an intriguing question you pose. I'll continue to give it thought and share anything I can come up with. I think you also open up a new area in the idea of how to introduce Epicureanism to children.

Post by "Don" of August 26, 2020 at 8:08 AM

I found these articles that may be helpful. Even the Buddhist ones appear "non-denominational"

<https://leftbrainbuddha.com/bedtime-ritual-help-thanks-wow/>

[https://amp.reddit.com/r/Parenting/co...s_bedtime_poem/](https://amp.reddit.com/r/Parenting/comments/s_bedtime_poem/)From there:

We are very thankful

We are very glad

For friends we meet

Food we eat

For home and mom and dad.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 26, 2020 at 8:41 AM

Thanks guys, as usual you don't disappoint. From your first post Cassius, I was thinking something derived from this:

“no one can live pleasantly without living wisely, honorably, and justly, and no one wisely, honorably, and justly without living pleasantly. ”

It's short and it has a nice rhythm to it. Plus it's useful to know by heart, as it would be expected to happen after daily repetition.

But as of now, for me, honorably falls within the realm of platonic ideals, but I'm open to a more pragmatic meaning for it, like justice (don't harm and don't be harmed) or wisely (use sensations, feelings and reason as criteria).

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2020 at 8:48 AM

Yes I think that the material I cited has lots of good stuff in it, but it would need to be reworded for use with a young child. I think you are right especially about PD5 and the wise/honor/just issue being dangerously Platonic-sounding for someone who doesn't yet understand that those terms are relative/subjective rather than being absolute.

It might be that one of more of the Vatican Sayings is more easily employable. I've always thought that some kind of wording of 47 might be good:

47. I have anticipated thee, Fortune, and I have closed off every one of your devious entrances. And we will not give ourselves up as captives, to thee or to any other circumstance; but when it is time for us to go, spitting contempt on life and on those who cling to it maundering, we will leave from life singing aloud a glorious triumph-song on how nicely we lived.

But I think depending on how long you feel like is workable, pretty much anything needs to be reworded for simplification.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 26, 2020 at 8:55 AM

"I don't have any specific saying of Epicurus or Lucretius right now, but one option might be focusing on gratitude. What are you most thankful for today? Or come up with a rote litany like a prayer: I'm thankful for ... And... And..."

The thing with gratitude is, as I understand it, that someone has to be the object of your gratitude, because you're grateful that he/she has been willingly good to you, and thus you recognize this good will. Being grateful to nature or some other non human thing would have to imply endowing them with the ability to will something unto us; please share a different point of view about gratitude if you can.

So When we tried this gratitude prayers we focused on being grateful to mom and dad for whatever (which seemed rather boastful since he's not coming up with these thoughts 🤔) and to his kinder teacher and to his grandparents and such...

Post by "Mathitis Kipouros" of August 26, 2020 at 9:19 AM

"Or pleasure. What made you the happiest today? Let your toddler reflect on what makes them happy throughout that day. "

I think this is a great idea, although I'd think more suited for older children, since right now I don't think he's yet ready to articulate something like this by himself.

But I see the potential in getting him accustomed to doing this, and later on being able to reflect each day on how he felt about such and such, to develop this awareness of sensations and feelings. I know I would've benefitted from doing this, instead of just asking to be kept safe and such.

Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2020 at 9:31 AM

Camotero it's great that you are giving thought to where to start. Given the Epicurean emphasis on being up front and frank and not "hiding the ball" like they accused Socrates of doing, no matter what you choose to emphasize you're in the role of leader and it's not necessarily a problem that you're asking them to repeat things that they don't fully understand. On the other hand if they don't understand it at all there's not much point in it. I keep thinking that perhaps the most fruitful path to explore is epistemological issues kind of like in the

pattern that Jefferson was thinking (in what I quoted above).

Perhaps even, after unwinding it to make it much more simple and repeatable, the point here:

24. If you reject any single sensation, and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion, as to the appearance awaiting confirmation, and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind, you will confound all other sensations, as well, with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgment. And if among the mental images created by your opinion you affirm both that which awaits confirmation, and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong.

' I feel bodies which are not myself: there are other existencies then. I call them matter. I feel them changing place. This gives me motion. Where there is an absence of matter, I call it void, or nothing, or immaterial space. On the basis of sensation, of matter and motion, we may erect the fabric of all the certainties we can have or need.

Post by “Don” of August 26, 2020 at 12:05 PM

[Quote from camotero](#)

The thing with gratitude is, as I understand it, that someone has to be the object of your gratitude, because you're grateful that he/she has been willingly good to you, and thus you recognize this good will. Being grateful to nature or some other non human thing would have to imply endowing them with the ability to will something unto us; please share a different point of view about gratitude if you can.

So When we tried this gratitude prayers we focused on being grateful to mom and dad for whatever (which seemed rather boastful since he's not coming up with these thoughts 😬) and to his kinder teacher and to his grandparents and such...

I would concur with your basic idea of gratitude. When my reminder alarm for keys in the ignition goes off, I find myself saying Thank you to whoever invented that. Literally 😊

I like some of the Buddhist gratitude practices I've seen, especially the meal "prayer" that starts

"I am grateful for this food, the work of many people..." On a basic level, it makes us stop and think how we're connected to people and the world from who made the meal to who grew the food to who shipped the food and so on.

With Nature, maybe gratitude isn't the right word. I think we can feel fortunate that we're alive and able to experience the pleasure of the sunshine on our face, the sight of stars in the sky, the power of a thunderstorm.

I so wish Epicurus's work *On Gifts and Gratitude* wasn't lost to us.

And I hear what you're saying about mom and dad. "Thank us! Thank us! How great are we!"



Post by “Joshua” of August 26, 2020 at 12:40 PM

Regarding gratitude, I don't agree that this emotion in the subject implies or requires an object.

I find myself alive in the universe. I know that there is sorrow, and fear, and that life sometimes hurts—but I also know that it is wonderful, *really* wonderful, sometimes sublime, just to be *alive* here. There is beauty and delight here that will move me even at my last breath. There is knowledge and philosophy to dull my pains, and to enhance my pleasures. There is friendship, romance, love, art, and literature—all the choicest fruits of a peaceable and prosperous age, in a free and civil society. To say that I am grateful is simply to say that I *appreciate* it. To appreciate something, and to appreciate the gift of something, are two different things. One who appreciates wine recognizes its worth and its specialness in a deep and penetrating way.

That's what it is to appreciate life and its blessings; to pause for a time and take stock. To see it deeply, and recognize its worth.

Because it could so easily have gone the other way.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 26, 2020 at 12:45 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

On the other hand if they don't understand it at all there's not much point in it.

Yes, I agree. The point right now would be to have a placeholder for later, and not to continue reinforcing something that later on could certainly bring more confusion (the current prayers).

[Quote from Cassius](#)

24. If you reject any single sensation, and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion, as to the appearance awaiting confirmation, and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind, you will confound all other sensations, as well, with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgment. And if among the mental images created by your opinion you affirm both that which awaits confirmation, and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong.

I'm afraid I don't fully comprehend what this paragraph reads. I believe my English is not so bad, but please bear in mind that it is not my first language and there may be nuances here that I'm not being able to grasp. What I'm getting is: If you reject one sensation your judgement will certainly be incomplete? That first long sentence is particularly difficult for me to follow all the way to the end. The second sentence I understood as: If you affirm an image which is not confirmed by the senses in combination with the ones that have been confirmed, you would be contaminating your judgement?

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I feel bodies which are not myself: there are other existencies then. I call them matter. I feel them changing place. This gives me motion. Where there is an absence of matter, I call it void, or nothing, or immaterial space. On the basis of sensation, of matter and motion, we may erect the fabric of all the certainties we can have or need.



Post by “Joshua” of August 26, 2020 at 1:00 PM

Your English is great, Camotero; have no fear on that point 😊

The classic example is the square tower that *appears* to the senses to be round from far away.

Reality: the tower is square

Misleading sensation: the tower is round

Option 1: discard the evidence of the senses because they are misleading. Knowledge cannot be derived from the senses.

Option 2: analyze *all relevant sensations* to arrive at a more complete understanding. Knowledge **can** be derived from the senses.

Pyrrho, the Skeptic, chose option 1.

Epicurus is emphatic; **Choose option 2!**

Post by “Don” of August 26, 2020 at 1:20 PM

[Joshua](#) : I know I liked your post above on gratitude and appreciation but had to say out loud "Well done!" I wish there was a Like button on this forum as well as a Really Like button. 😊

I think you absolutely nailed the idea! Thanks!

Post by “Godfrey” of August 26, 2020 at 2:15 PM

Quote

Regarding gratitude, I don't agree that this emotion in the subject implies or requires an object.

Well put Joshua! A key word that you used is "emotion."

I would add that one can be grateful **for** without being grateful **to**. Religion teaches that a person should **give** thanks, but what is important is to **feel** thankful. The emotions are central to being human; the more we are in touch with them the better. Unlike the Stoics.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 26, 2020 at 2:24 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

"I am grateful for this food, the work of many people..." On a basic level, it makes us stop and think how we're connected to people and the world from who made the meal to who grew the food to who shipped the food and so on.

Yes this is a good point.

[Quote from Don](#)

With Nature, maybe gratitude isn't the right word. I think we can feel fortunate that we're alive and able to experience the pleasure of the sunshine on our face, the sight of stars in the sky, the power of a thunderstorm.

Well, yes. Acknowledging that it is good that we are where we are and can experience what we can experience, and to be able to reflect on it. Lucky lumps of atoms we. I agree this is a reason to be happy and good to have in mind before going to bed.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 26, 2020 at 2:34 PM

[Quote from JJElbert](#)

I find myself alive in the universe. I know that there is sorrow, and fear, and that life sometimes hurts—but I also know that it is wonderful, really wonderful, sometimes sublime, just to be alive here. There is beauty and delight here that will move me even at my last breath. There is knowledge and philosophy to dull my pains, and to enhance my pleasures. There is friendship, romance, love, art, and literature—all the choicest fruits of a peaceable and prosperous age, in a free and civil society. To say that I am grateful is simply to say that I appreciate it. To appreciate something, and to appreciate the gift of something, are two different things. One who appreciates wine recognizes its worth and its specialness in a deep and penetrating way.

That's what it is to appreciate life and its blessings; to pause for a time and take stock. To see it deeply, and recognize its worth.

Yes, I agree with you. It's a matter of appreciation and to gifting to yourself that pleasureable feeling of wonder. Perhaps, what could be a good prayer would be something that comprises this: An expression of acknowledgement of our existence as something wonderful, and with this renewed vision, an appreciation of whatever concrete things we have experienced during that day.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 26, 2020 at 2:48 PM

Let me share that I am very glad that in this forum my nerdiness for looking up the etymology of words in order to understand things better is more likely to find resonance.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I would add that one can be grateful for without being grateful to. Religion teaches that a person should give thanks, but what is important is to feel thankful.

Aligned with your comment, I let the nerdiness begin:

Adjective

grateful (comparative gratefuller or more grateful, superlative gratefullest or most grateful)

>>>Appreciative; *thankful*.

Adjective

thankful (comparative more thankful, superlative most thankful)

>>>Showing appreciation or gratitude.

Noun

thank (plural thanks)

>>>(obsolete) An expression of *appreciation; a thought*.

Etymology 1

From Middle English thank, from Old English þanc (“**thought, favour, grace, pleasure, satisfaction**, thanks”), from Proto-Germanic *þankaz (“**thought, remembrance, gratitude**”)...

No object is mentioned. Once again, it seems like the word may have been repurposed.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 26, 2020 at 2:51 PM

We're very grateful for nerdiness here! 😊

Post by “Don” of August 26, 2020 at 3:32 PM

[Mathitis Kipouros](#) , your etymological nerdiness is in good company 😊

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2020 at 3:32 PM

As for that translation above from [PD24](#), I would like to blame Bailey for it, but I have rarely if ever seen one by anyone else that makes for clear reading either.

Like Joshua said, the point in the end is not really so difficult but the wording is labyrinthine:

24. If you reject any single sensation, and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion, as to the appearance awaiting confirmation, and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind, you will confound all other sensations, as well, with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgment. And if among the mental images created by your opinion you affirm both that which awaits confirmation, and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong.

We probably ought to work on a paraphrase!

Post by “Godfrey” of August 26, 2020 at 5:39 PM

This translation by Strodach seems clearer to me, although not any shorter:

"24. If you summarily rule out any single sensation and do not make a distinction between the element of belief that is superimposed on a percept that awaits verification and what is actually present in sensation or in the feelings or some percept of the mind itself, you will cast doubt on all other sensations by your unfounded interpretation and consequently abandon all the criteria of truth. On the other hand, in cases of interpreted data, if you accept as true those that need

verification as well as those that do not, you will still be in error, since the whole question at issue in every judgment of what is true or not true will be left intact."

Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2020 at 8:04 PM

I ran out of time earlier to play with this but I will do that now:

Strodach:

"24. If you summarily rule out any single sensation

and do not make a distinction between the element of belief that is superimposed on a percept that awaits verification

and what is actually present in sensation or in the feelings or some percept of the mind itself,

you will cast doubt on all other sensations by your unfounded interpretation and consequently abandon all the criteria of truth.

Bailey:

24. If you reject any single sensation,

and fail to distinguish between the conclusion of opinion, as to the appearance awaiting confirmation,

and that which is actually given by the sensation or feeling, or each intuitive apprehension of the mind,

you will confound all other sensations, as well, with the same groundless opinion, so that you will reject every standard of judgment.

Paraphrase:

24 If you reject any evidence provided by your senses

and if you fail to distinguish between those opinions of yours which require additional evidence before considering them to be confirmed,

and those opinions which are already confirmed through the evidence of the senses, anticipations, and feelings

then you will confuse together that which is false and that which is true, and you will lose confidence in your faculties which are your only standard of truth

Simplification:

If you fail to consider the evidence provided by your faculties [your senses, anticipations, and feelings]

and if you fail to keep separate in your mind those things about which you have enough evidence to be confident, from those things about which you don't have enough evidence to be sure

then by doing so you are giving up your confidence in your faculties, which provide your only ability to judge between that which is true and that which is not.

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>On the other hand, in cases of interpreted data, if you accept as true those that need verification as well as those that do not,</p> | <p>And if among the mental images created by your opinion you affirm both that which awaits confirmation, and that which does not,</p> | <p>And if among the opinions you have reached you affirm as true both that which needs further confirmation and that which is already confirmed,</p> | <p>And if you consider to be equally true not only those things for which you have ample evidence, but also those things for which you need more evidence,</p> |
| <p>you will still be in error, since the whole question at issue in every judgment of what is true or not true will be left intact."</p> | <p>you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong.</p> | <p>Then you will inevitably fall into error, since you will have decided that you are not able to judge between what is true and that which is not true.</p> | <p>Then you will make mistakes at every turn, because you will have given up on the faculties given you by Nature, which are your only guide to truth.</p> |

Post by “Cassius” of August 26, 2020 at 8:44 PM

In evaluating that [PD24](#) I think it's critical that we consider the DeLacy categories we've been discussing recently, because it seems likely that what we are discussing is not just an issue of "true vs false." We have to consider the "multivalent" aspect that several possibilities can be considered "true" at one time, even if they are not the same, and that leads us to a deeper definition of what 'true' should be considered to mean. We need to start out with the understanding that there are many things that we will never be able to judge directly, but which we need to form conclusions about based on analogy, so we need a complete understanding of what "truth" means in that circumstance. I think that Epicurus is probably considering that aspect in this wording and that is why it seems needlessly complicated. The reason its not easy to reduce it to simpler form is that we have to be careful not to oversimplify into our own more superficial definitions of "true" and "false."

Post by “Don” of August 26, 2020 at 9:38 PM

Hicks translation

24 If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to discriminate between that which is matter of opinion and awaits further confirmation and that which is already present, whether in sensation or in feeling or in any mental apprehension, you will throw into confusion even the rest of your sensations by your groundless belief, so as to reject the truth altogether. If you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation in ideas based on opinion, as well as that which does not, you will not escape error, as you will be taking sides in every question involving truth and error.

Saint-Andre translation

24 If you reject a perception outright and do not distinguish between your opinion about what will happen after, what came before, your feelings, and all the layers of imagination involved in your thoughts, you will throw your other perceptions into confusion because of your trifling opinions; as a result, you will reject the very criterion of truth. And if when forming concepts from your opinions you treat as confirmed everything that will happen and what you do not witness thereafter, then you will not avoid what is false, so that you will remove all argument and all judgment about what is and is not correct.

Post by “Cassius” of August 27, 2020 at 4:59 AM

i think its always one of the best approaches to compare different translations so thanks for those variations. I tend to think Saint Andre is going off the beam in this one but even when we think a version is less accurate it helps to discuss where and why we disagree.

Post by “Don” of August 27, 2020 at 6:34 AM

I'm actually in the process of working through the original Greek. I'll try and post something over the next few days. One discovery I did make already is that that convoluted multi-embedded phrasing in the translations actually just works out to a listing - word for word - of the three parts of the Canon in the original Greek. That was unexpected. Consider that a teaser.

Also, I've found on this one at least that Saint-Andre seems to be mostly sticking close to the original text although I think he's being overly complicated as well.

Post by “Don” of August 27, 2020 at 6:55 AM

This one from Mensch in the 2018 edition of DL's Lives seems pretty accurate as well (although I have differences of opinion about her last few phrases). She does bring out those three parts of the Canon from the original Greek nicely though:

Quote

If you reject any sensation absolutely, and you do not distinguish between an opinion that awaits confirmation and a present reality (whether of sensation, feeling, or perception), you will also throw your other sensations into confusion with your groundless belief, and in doing so will be rejecting altogether the criterion. But if, when assessing opinions, you affirm as true everything that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, you will not escape error; for you will be preserving complete uncertainty in every judgement between right and wrong opinion.

Post by “Cassius” of August 27, 2020 at 7:30 AM

I do like the phrase "present reality" - I think it's a premise that's what real to us is what comes to us from the senses, so calling that 'reality' is a good reminder.

As far as "throwing other sensations into confusion" that seems less than optimum, because I doubt Epicurus would say that the senses can ever be confused - it's our opinion about them and what they say that can be confused.

"rejecting altogether the criterion" may be less than optimum too as the reference to what "criterion" is supposed to mean seems lacking.

I'm looking forward to what you think about the last phrases.

Quote

If you reject any sensation absolutely, and you do not distinguish between an opinion that awaits confirmation and a present reality (whether of sensation, feeling, or perception), you will also throw your other sensations into confusion with your groundless belief, and in doing so will be rejecting altogether the criterion. But if, when assessing opinions, you affirm as true everything that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, you will not escape error; for you will be preserving complete uncertainty in every judgement between right and wrong opinion.

Post by “Don” of August 27, 2020 at 8:18 AM

You have to look at that whole phrase:

Quote

...throw your other sensations into confusion with your groundless belief...

It's not the senses themselves that are confused but ourselves being confused about what our sensations are telling us due to our groundless beliefs.

The "criterion" is simply pointing back to the Canon if you look at the original text. Criterion is basically a transliteration of the Greek here. That's why she uses it. A better translation to get at the connection would be "the standard of truth." (I also just realized that Epicurus's work on the Canon is literally Περὶ κριτηρίου ἢ Κανῶν Peri **kritēriou** ē Kanōn. So, Epicurus himself refers to the Canon as the criterion.)

Post by “Cassius” of August 27, 2020 at 8:59 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

It's not the senses themselves that are confused but ourselves being confused about what our sensations are telling us due to our groundless beliefs.

Yes i agree with your conclusion, but I'll pick nits and smile and say that "throw your other sensations into confusion...." could be improved because the "senses" are never confused, are they? 😊

Post by “Don” of August 28, 2020 at 8:15 PM

[Mathitis Kipouros](#) : I know we strayed from your original question/request. Did you get anything helpful for your toddler? Anything you'd like to revisit?

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 29, 2020 at 12:04 AM

Thanks a lot for following up [Don](#) - I enjoyed the straying so thanks to all of you guys for what you shared. Please don't think the simplicity of this answer implies a lack of appreciation for all the very valuable replies you guys posted; it's just that I've been lacking time to read thoroughly all of them, but I will try and reply if I can.

Regarding my original post, the winner was this:

“We are very thankful

We are very glad

For friends we meet

And food we eat

For home and mom and dad.”

Winner because my wife and kid loved it, and we prayed it together and no supernatural beings took part 😊.

I made my own translation to Spanish:

“Nos sentimos muy agradecidos

Y con razones para contentos estar

Por los amigos que conocimos

Y las comidas que compartimos

Por mamá, papá y nuestro hogar.”

Ojalá les guste.

See you around.

Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2020 at 7:26 AM

There's an awful lot to be said for rhyme and - what's the term? - "meter" or "pacing"? Shows how little I know about poetry, but the bottom line is that reads very well and sticks in the memory!

Post by “Don” of September 3, 2020 at 12:01 AM

I finally had a chance to finish [my commentary on PD 24, posted over on that doctrine's thread on the forum.](#)

Post by “Cassius” of September 4, 2020 at 5:57 PM

I was looking over this thread again and I keep coming back to Thomas Jefferson here:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

‘I feel: therefore I exist.’ I feel bodies which are not myself: there are other existencies then. I call them matter. I feel them changing place. This gives me motion. Where there is an absence of matter, I call it void, or nothing, or immaterial space. On the basis of sensation, of matter and motion, we may erect the fabric of all the certainties we can have or need.

Seems to me that he must have given a lot of thought to exactly the question Camotero is asking - that of coming up with a pithy summary to serve in his words as his *habitual anodyne* - (“**I was obliged to recur ultimately to my habitual anodyne...**”)

Seems to me that he did a pretty good job of summing up the essentials of Epicurean physics, or maybe we should think of it as a *perspective* on physics, a combination of physics and epistemology, which he's correct to observe is the basis on which everything else rests.

Over time others can and will do better, and do it in more modern and elegant phrasing, but I do think this general direction is the right one. When you're questioning everything about your life, or when you're just trying to dig back to "what should my starting point be?" it seems to me this is pretty darn close.

Post by “Charles” of September 6, 2020 at 12:02 PM

[Quote from camotero](#)

Regarding my original post, the winner was this:

“We are very thankful

We are very glad

For friends we meet

And food we eat

For home and mom and dad.”

Winner because my wife and kid loved it, and we prayed it together and no supernatural beings took part 😊 .

Display More

[Mathitis Kipouros](#) I don't have a suggestion for your kids, however, a few lines from the opening chorus of Handel's *Acis & Galatea* come to mind as possible options for dinner prayers, or "grace".

For us the zephyr blows,

For us distills the dew,

For us unfolds the rose,

And flow'rs display their hue.

Or/And

For us the winters rain,

For us the summers shine,

Spring swells for us the grain,

And autumn bleeds the wine.

The context of this chorus is that the shepherds & nymphs live in harmony together, living a life of pleasure with lots of callbacks to Lucretius. To them, they take from each thing its most pleasant gift & are happy and grateful for it.

<https://youtu.be/NVMMd3JpTIY?t=333>

Post by “Cassius” of September 6, 2020 at 4:00 PM

Great approach, Charles - and that reminds me of something else, and I cannot believe that a search here does not pull it up....

Post by “Cassius” of September 6, 2020 at 4:16 PM

Wagner struggles with the issues of pleasure and pain in his Tannhauseur, and he makes the hero waiver back and forth, but some of the excerpts when he is praising pleasure and great poetry, especially when combined with his music. In this 30 minute clip I capture some of the most important of the pleasure/pain discussion. I've cued this to a short song outburst that is one of the best:

After the post I have cued, the second scene in this clip is also excellent. In the song contest, the hero sings in praise of what is at least a loosely Epicurean view of love/pleasure against what is very specifically a stoic/platonic view of love/pleasure. That begins at the point where two platonic lover sings a short statement, rebuked strongly by the hero, who is at this point pretty much channeling Epicurus, at 14:38. In both cases you'll hear a little bit of crosstalk that is less than inspiring, but if you give it just a few minutes in both scenes you will see exactly what I am talking about. In these excerpts, especially the singing contest, it appears to me that Wagner is showing that he knows ****exactly**** what the issues are between Epicurean and non-Epicurean views of pleasure. He seemingly takes the side of the Platonic/religionists in the end, but I think I have read, and I think myself, that his argument in favor of the Epicurean side is much more convincing. And if you wade through the whole of the play, the religionists don't come off so great either, and "god" seems to bless the hero despite his supposedly unpardonable flirtations with Venus.

<https://youtu.be/-RV60cW4IbM?t=554>

Post by “Martin” of November 9, 2022 at 12:56 PM

Epicurean non-belief creed

First draft:

I do not have any beliefs.

I know some stuff.

I know that some of my knowledge may be wrong.

I know that there is a lot more stuff which I do not know.

I know that there is stuff of which I do not even know that I do not know of it.

This very partial knowledge does not compel me to any belief, because so far, I have acquired any knowledge needed to enable a pleasurable life, and I am confident to keep this attitude until death terminates my existence.

Post by “Godfrey” of November 9, 2022 at 2:40 PM

This is quite thought provoking [Martin](#) !

Overall, I like it. But in the spirit of inquiry, can we really say that we don't have any beliefs without becoming Skeptics? For instance, I believe that I'm not a brain in a vat. Do I know that? I think so, but I could be wrong. I believe what science tells me, to the extent of my understanding as a lay person. Do I know it? Not really, I'm accepting the information provided by people that I consider honest and better informed than me. More "knowledgeable."

belief

1. *an acceptance that a statement is true or that something exists. "his **belief in** the value of hard work"*
2. *trust, faith, or confidence in someone or something. "I've still got belief in myself"*

knowledge

1. *facts, information, and skills acquired by a person through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. "a thirst for knowledge"*
2. *awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation. "the program had been developed **without his knowledge**"*

Thanks for posting this: it's a good opportunity to clarify the definitions and ramifications of the terms knowledge and belief.

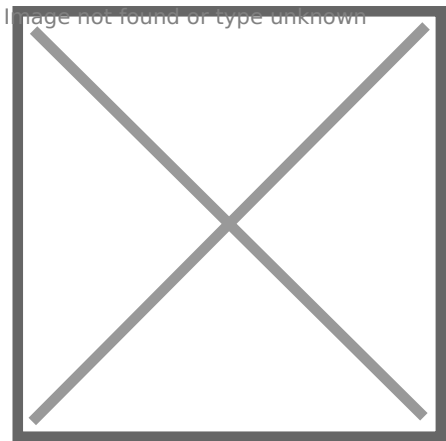
Post by “Cassius” of November 9, 2022 at 3:07 PM

I think what you're talking about Godfrey is why DeWitt talks a lot about "faith" in Epicurean philosophy (if I recall correctly) in which I gather that he's talking about a blend of confidence based on information that we know to be limited but which we have good reason to think is sound. So just like a lot of words we have to parse "belief" and even "faith" to be sure exactly what we mean.

Reminds me of my high school's motto which was Fide sed cui vide which they used to translate as "have faith but be careful in what"

Post by “Godfrey” of November 9, 2022 at 3:51 PM

Coincidentally, I just listened to this podcast which has a conversation on beliefs and science, beginning in the second half of the podcast.



[Clear+Vivid with Alan Alda - James Zimring: Fuzzy thinking and the Big Whopper](#)

Too many of us instinctively feel that a quarter pound hamburger is bigger than a third of a pound. And that's just one of the mistakes we make in too quickly...
podcasts.google.com

That's a good high school motto BTW.

Post by “Don” of November 9, 2022 at 4:25 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Coincidentally, I just listened to this podcast which has a conversation on beliefs and science, beginning in the second half of the podcast.

<https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6L...4NTFIZWE0?ep=14>

That's a good high school motto BTW.

Thanks for the Alan Alda podcast reminder! Big fan but he got pushed down within my subscriptions.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of November 10, 2022 at 1:40 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

it's a good opportunity to clarify the definitions and ramifications of the terms knowledge and belief.

Also, it's kind of contradictory to have a "non-belief creed" just from the definition of the word creed itself:

From [Middle English](#) *crede*, from [Old English](#) *crēda*, *crēdo*, from [Latin](#) *crēdō* (“I believe”)

I think "creed" should stay there though, what I don't think is appropriate is the "non-belief" part. Perhaps just calling it "Epicurean creed" and instead of starting with "I don't believe in anything", starting with "I believe in what I believe because...".

Post by “Don” of November 10, 2022 at 1:53 PM

The closest the ancient Epicureans got to a creed in my opinion was the Tetrpharmakos.

Post by “Pacatus” of November 10, 2022 at 4:40 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So just like a lot of words we have to parse "belief" and even "faith" to be sure exactly what we mean.

Somewhere I have an etymology book that indicates “believe” in English originally meant “to hold dear.” This seems to have been (e.g. in the KJV Bible) a valid (if perhaps poetic) rendering of the Greek *pisteo*.

Cognates of “believe” include *lief*, *leave*, *furlough*, *love*.

But the word came to mean “what one thinks” – rather than a confidence or trust – which is what I take “faith” (in a very mundane sense) to mean. Christians often tend to take both terms to mean what one is certain of, regardless of actual evidence (as in the phrase “I believe in”) – whereas I view “faith” more as an attitude of – decisional – confidence in the face of uncertainty; something how the sports psychologists use it.

For myself, I only use the word “believe” (or “belief”) in the fairly mundane sense of: “it seems to me” or “it appears to be so” or “I think so” or “the evidence indicates that ...”. Thus, it always something “checkable” empirically.

+++++

Some years ago, I wrote a whimsy poem playing with the cognate words mentioned above:

Belief

(an etymological poem)

What is belief except to give leave
to what your own heart’s desire
would *lief* allow for you to follow,
and to hallow always with your love?
That is as much as I will believe—
so long as beauty is safely left,
her colorful tapestries, without
furlough, to weave. As for all the rest:
An it will harm none, do as ye *lief*

and may all be well—beyond belief.

I really think it is not a good poem - but it was fun to write. 😊

Post by “Joshua” of November 10, 2022 at 6:58 PM

Reminds of the time George R. R. Martin discovered the word 'leal' and used it in every 4th sentence...in a sequel. Pretty jarring!

Post by “Don” of November 11, 2022 at 7:48 AM

This part of the thread does seem to revolve around something like the Greek πιστεύω pisteuō, from which I thought - up until 30 seconds ago! - we got the word epistemology.

πιστεύω pisteuō

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, πιστ-εύω](#)

Epistemology on the other hand:

Etymology Online: "theory of knowledge," 1856, coined by Scottish philosopher James F. Ferrier (1808-1864) from Greek episteme "knowledge, acquaintance with (something), skill, experience," from Ionic Greek epistasthai "know how to do, understand," literally "overstand," from epi "over, near" (see epi-) + histasthai "to stand," from PIE root *sta- "to stand, make or be firm."

Etymology from ἐπί (epí) + ἵστημι (hístēmi)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, ἐπίσταμαι](#)

So, epistemology seems to conjure up for me that idea of the Epicureans being "dogmatic" in that they were "making a stand" They were willing to take a firm position as opposed to remaining forever skeptical and puzzled.

btw, I like that word "overstand"! I think I would much rather overstand something than understand it 😊

Post by “Don” of November 11, 2022 at 11:14 AM

I thought I had posted about prayer previously and sure enough - 2 years ago - I was going through Obbink's translation and commentary on On Piety:

Post

[RE: Philodemus On Piety](#)

προσευχεσθαι γαρ εν τωι Περί [Βιω]ν οικείον είναι [ημεί]ν φησίν.

I promised something on prayer yesterday, so to fulfill my self-imposed obligation 😊, here's what Epicurus said about prayer according to column 26 of On Piety. The original is above and is mostly intact in the papyrus.

For he says in the *On Ways of Life*, προσευχεσθαι is οικείον for us.

προσευχεσθαι [proseukhesthai] means "prayer", specifically to offer prayers or vows; offer prayers or worship. The word can be broken down...



Don

December 16, 2020 at 11:05 PM

Not that it's any great insight! Just thought y'all could find it interesting.

Post by “Pacatus” of November 11, 2022 at 12:21 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

Reminds of the time George R. R. Martin discovered the word 'leal' and used it in every 4th sentence...in a sequel. Pretty jarring!

Ha! I often catch myself re-using a word that I've become enamored of in successive poems -- so I try to be wary ... 🤔 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 12, 2022 at 2:36 PM

[Quote from Martin](#)

Epicurean non-belief creed

First draft:

I do not have any beliefs.

I know some stuff.

I know that some of my knowledge may be wrong.

I know that there is a lot more stuff which I do not know.

I know that there is stuff of which I do not even know that I do not know of it.

This very partial knowledge does not compel me to any belief, because so far, I have acquired any knowledge needed to enable a pleasurable life, and I am confident to keep this attitude until death terminates my existence.

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Possible re-phrasing:

Epicurean Creed

Knowledge and faith in that knowledge must be backed by observation by the senses (or as augmented by trustworthy tools which can accurately take measurements).

And if someone else is making the observations we must have adequate trust that they know how to correctly make observations. The correct way to make observations is: 1) to make sure that we are not confusing our observations with any opinions about what we wish to be true and so we must have the ability to separate our observations from our opinions 2) we make sure we have gathered enough evidence before drawing a conclusion. When making conclusions: 1) we understand that correlation does not imply causation 2) we cannot put our faith in something unless we know that the observations were correct and that the conclusion drawn is sound.

I think this is worthwhile to do, and this may still need adjustment or more added.

Quote

We've all been told that correlation does not imply causation. Yet many business leaders, elected officials, and media outlets still make causal claims based on misleading correlations. These claims are too often unscrutinized, amplified, and mistakenly used to guide decisions.

Examples abound: Consider a recent health study that set out to understand whether taking baths can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. The analysis found that people who took baths regularly were less likely to have cardiovascular disease or suffer strokes. The authors conclude that the data suggests "a beneficial effect" of baths. Without a controlled experiment, or a natural experiment, one in which subjects are chosen randomly and without variable manipulation, it's hard to know whether this relationship is causal. For example, it's possible that regular bath takers are generally less stressed and have more free time to relax, which could be the real reason they have lower rates of heart disease. Still, these findings were widely circulated, with headlines like, "Taking a bath isn't just relaxing. It could also be good for your heart."

A large body of research in behavioral economics and psychology has highlighted systematic mistakes we can make when looking at data. We tend to seek evidence that confirms our preconceived notions and ignore data that might go against our hypotheses. We neglect important aspects of the way that data was generated. More broadly, it's easy to focus on the data in front of you, even when the most important data is missing. As Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman has said, it can be as if "what you see is all there is."

This can lead to mistakes and avoidable disasters, whether it's an individual, a company, or a government that's making the decision. The world is increasingly filled with data, and we are regularly bombarded with facts and figures. We must learn to analyze data and assess causal claims — a skill that is increasingly important for business and government leaders.

<https://hbr.org/2021/11/leader...-with-causation>

Post by "Cassius" of November 12, 2022 at 3:19 PM

Wikipedia article on the correlation / causation issue.
https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correlati...imply_causation

Lots of subtleties because you wouldn't want to suggest that correlation is somehow itself misleading ... The issue seems to be that the error is in giving it more weight than it deserves

rather than saying that it should be given no weight at all as an indicator and making sure that all other circumstances are given appropriate weight.

Post by “Cassius” of November 12, 2022 at 3:21 PM

Kalosymi can you pithily condense to match Martin's formulation?

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 12, 2022 at 3:21 PM

[Quote from camotero](#)

Regarding my original post, the winner was this:

“We are very thankful

We are very glad

For friends we meet

And food we eat

For home and mom and dad.”

Winner because my wife and kid loved it, and we prayed it together and no supernatural beings took part.

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Thank you [Mathitis Kipouros](#), I think this question you brought up and the result is very good (provided by [Don](#) in post 4). And this seems like a good prayer for children.

As adults, especially ones who were raised in church, it might be good to also create adult Epicurean prayers. And there are various reasons for prayer: for when there is anxiety regarding the uncertainty of the future, for when there are difficult challenges, or for when there is sadness or illness. And also there is giving thanks and gratitude, at meals, at bedtime, and when waking in the morning. And I think it would be a good thing to add here to this thread -- and I will see if I can come up with anything and post soon. And [Pacatus](#) and [Joshua](#) with your

poetic abilities if you have any adult prayer ideas you can come up with, please add 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 12, 2022 at 3:27 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Kalosymi can you pithily condense to match Martin's formulation?

I suppose my version in post 52 is very different than Martin's formulation (too different). Also, I still need to study [PD24](#) to get more clear on that.

Post by “Cassius” of November 12, 2022 at 3:42 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I suppose my version in post 52 is very different than Martin's formulation (too different).

It's a good start and working through revisions and alternatives is always helpful

Post by “Pacatus” of November 12, 2022 at 4:51 PM

[Kalosyni](#)

In the plain prayer of breathing -
life-giving pleasure of breath,
I [we] give thanks - and rest.

+++++

For me, the best prayers are brief: easy to remember. And brevity poetry (like haiku) is deceptively hard.

This one could preface a period (perhaps just a few moments) of silent prayer/meditation, focusing on the *pleasure* of your breathing (an Epicurean spin on breathing meditation), returning to that as unwanted thoughts intrude.

The Trappist tradition of contemplative “centering prayer” uses a simple “sacred word” – not like a mantra, but simply to return to silent-mind prayer when thoughts arise. One would enunciate the word slowly. One could use an “Epicurean” word like *hedone*. Or *pneuma*, which can mean breath as well as spirit or soul. Or *eudaimonia*. (Just notions that came quickly.)

I’ll keep thinking ...

Post by “Don” of November 12, 2022 at 5:05 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

For me, the best prayers are brief: easy to remember.

That's always been one of my reasons for advocating for the Tetrpharmakos 😊

Post by “Pacatus” of November 12, 2022 at 5:44 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

That's always been one of my reasons for advocating for the Tetrpharmakos 😊

That is both simple and familiar to an Epicurean. The usual English translations, though, seem more like instructions or rubrics, rather than self-expressive prayer or meditative affirmations. And not everyone will find the Greek either resonant or easy to remember/recite. 🙄

Post by “Don” of November 12, 2022 at 6:07 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

[Quote from Don](#)

That's always been one of my reasons for advocating for the Tetrpharmakos



That is both simple and familiar to an Epicurean. The usual English translations, though, seem more like instructions or rubrics, rather than self-expressive prayer or meditative affirmations. And not everyone will find the Greek either resonant or easy to remember/recite. 🤔

LOL! I'll take that as a challenge to come up with one that's not in the imperative and is more prayer-like 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 12, 2022 at 6:09 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

I find myself alive in the universe. I know that there is sorrow, and fear, and that life sometimes hurts—but I also know that it is wonderful, really wonderful, sometimes sublime, just to be alive here. There is beauty and delight here that will move me even at my last breath. There is knowledge and philosophy to dull my pains, and to enhance my pleasures. There is friendship, romance, love, art, and literature—all the choicest fruits of a peaceable and prosperous age, in a free and civil society. To say that I am grateful is simply to say that I appreciate it. To appreciate something, and to appreciate the gift of something, are two different things. One who appreciates wine recognizes its worth and its specialness in a deep and penetrating way.

That's what it is to appreciate life and its blessings

I really like this, and maybe will use some of this (if you don't mind [Joshua](#)) to create a kind of prayer.

Also thinking something similarly pithy with regard to "prayer" during illness -- that I remember that slight pains can be endured by adding in pleasure, and extreme pains are only short in duration. (Feeling a little under the weather and once my mind feels a little clearer will dive into

this).

And also work on "prayer" addressing anxiety, fear, sadness.

Post by "Pacatus" of November 12, 2022 at 6:10 PM

[Don](#)

LOL!!! I am too. 😊 If we get close, people can hopefully use the "template" to make their own more personal.

Post by "Pacatus" of November 12, 2022 at 6:34 PM

Tetrapharmakos Prayer [a draft]

Unaffrighted by gods,
unworried by death,
with what is good easy-come
and travails tranquilly borne,
in your Garden we rest,
by simple pleasures blest.

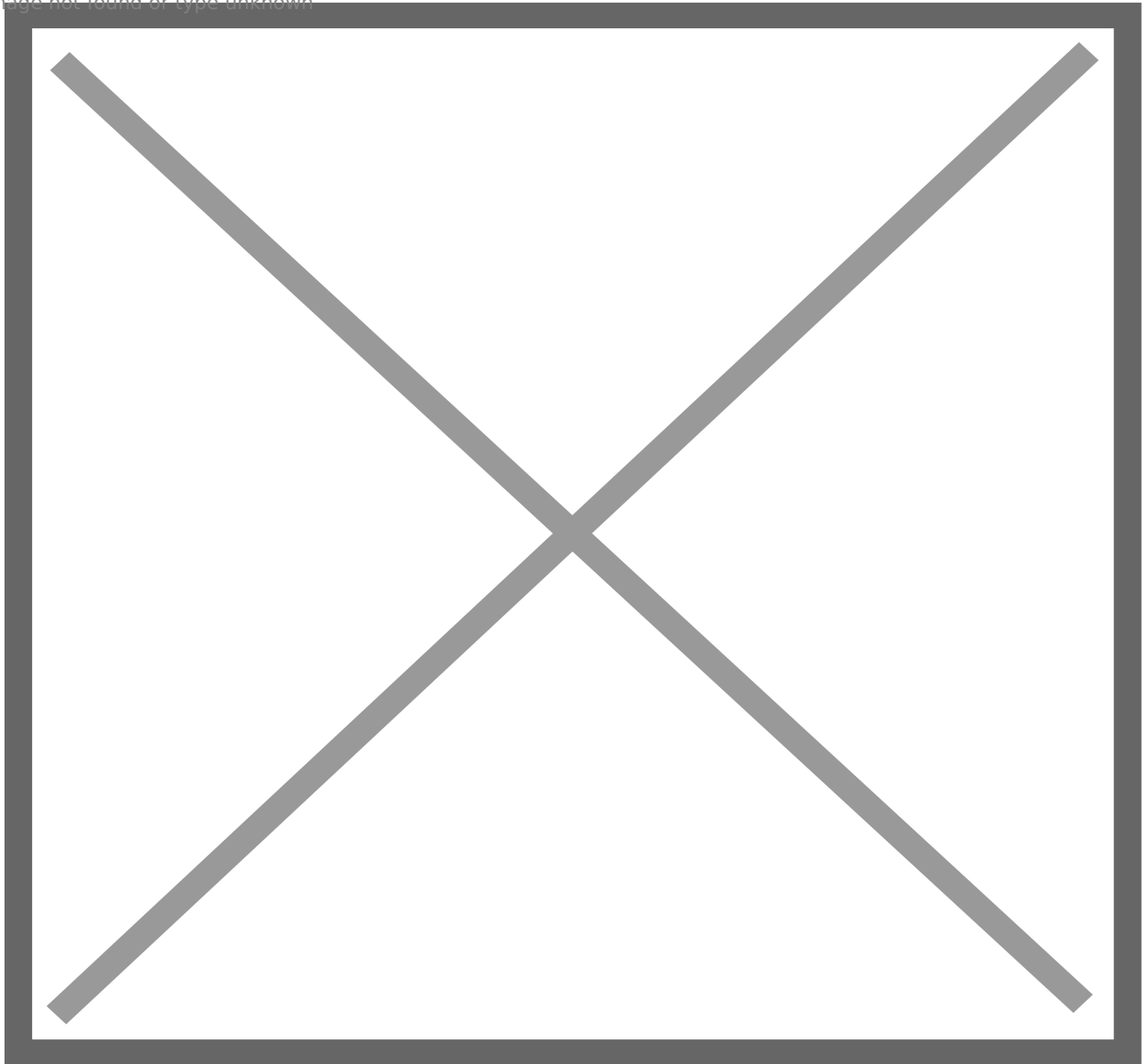
+++++

This is a first pass. I am trying for short-syllable lines with some rhythm. One might use it with an image of Epicurus for meditation. Again, a first pass - till tomorrow! ☐

Post by “Don” of November 12, 2022 at 7:54 PM

Thought y'all might be interested:

Image not found or type unknown



[List of 168 Poetic Forms for Poets](#)

Check out this list of 168 poetic forms for poets that includes everything from abstract poetry and ae freislighe to villanelle and zappai—and so many more in...

www.writersdigest.com

Post by “Don” of November 13, 2022 at 12:19 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1670-epicurean-substitute-for-prayer/>

Okay, a very quick attempt at an imayo (Japanese 4-line poem with 12 syllables in each line in a 7 first / 5 last split with a caesura separating them. Lines can also be split at the caesura. And, no, I didn't even know this was a poem style until I looked at that list in the last post!)

So, this is an attempt at a possible prayer-like, poetic rendition of the Tetrpharmakos:

Blissful gods I do not fear | free from care and woe.

My pending death brings nothing | neither rod nor gift.

The good is pleasant feeling | easy to procure.

The terrible is painful | but we can endure.

With the lines split:

Blissful gods I do not fear

free from care and woe.

My pending death brings nothing

neither rod nor gift.

The good is pleasant feeling

easy to procure.

The terrible is painful

but I can endure.

Post by “Don” of November 13, 2022 at 11:08 AM

Okay, so here is draft 2, composed in the light of day. I tried to pay more attention to the syllable structure and alliteration and a little rhyme:

Blissful gods I do not fear,

free from care and woe.

Destined death bears not a threat,

think not rod nor gift.

Pleasant feeling is the good,
easy to procure.

Terror comes from pain and grief,
but I can endure.

EDIT: Okay, final revision (LOL) with more attention to syllable structure and formal alliteration, etc. I can almost guarantee this won't be the last one... but I'll stop hijacking the thread!

Blissful gods I do not fear,
free from care and woe.

Destined death, devoid of risk,
removes rod and reward.

Pleasant feeling is the good,
gained by nature's ease.

Dreadful pain disturbs my peace,
but I can endure.

Note: I have purposefully "almost" alliterated "peace" and "but" (same articulation, but one voiced one unvoiced). I also just realized ease and peace are almost rhymes with the same voiced/unvoiced pair. That was accidental but ... hmm...

Post by “Pacatus” of November 13, 2022 at 12:42 PM

[Don](#)

I like it. 👍 Truth be told, I never was much of a pray-er (except in the contemplative way that I mentioned above) even in my long Christian years. Quiet contemplation, with perhaps a mantra, suits me better.

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 13, 2022 at 1:01 PM

I almost went to this [Unity church](#) this morning, but then I felt my "atheist" spirit say to me better to go worship at a "house of coffee" (a coffeehouse).

Here is what was on their website (everything is good except the Bible verse at the end).

Quote

I use divine wisdom to find my way.

When I'm pondering a perplexing question or I need to make an important choice, I reach beyond human reasoning to the limitless wisdom of divine mind, never further away than my next thought.

After clarifying my question and considering my available options, I release the situation, focusing instead on the divine presence within. I affirm: I am using divine wisdom to show me the way. In prayerful silence, peace envelops me.

As I conclude my prayer time and resume my activities, I may experience a flash of insight or a more gradual understanding. However it happens, I trust my next steps will become clear to me. Confident in my divine guidance, I move forward with calm assurance.

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.—Matthew 6:33

Post by "Don" of November 13, 2022 at 1:09 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

with perhaps a mantra,



How about this:

No fear

No death

Feel good

Bear pain

That's ****very**** much an "of the top of my head."

As always, there's much more going on behind why I chose these lines here and in the above poem, but I'll jump down off my TetrapharmaBox for awhile now.

Post by "Pacatus" of November 13, 2022 at 1:58 PM

But you've stimulated me back to the TetrapharmaBox! 😊 😄

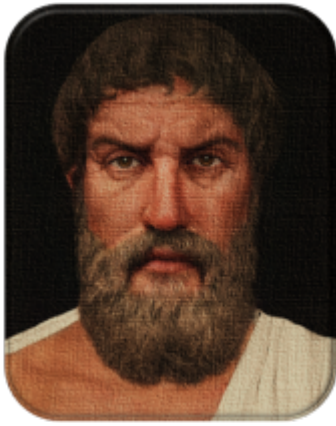
Post by "Pacatus" of November 13, 2022 at 3:05 PM

Tetrapharmakos Meditation Prayer

Unaffrighted by carefree gods,
untroubled by unfeeling death -
humble pleasures proffer delight,
tranquility becalms travail.

~ ~ ~

By spirit of your Garden blest,
each today be bountiful fest.



+++++

Another pass (stimulated by Don's - but not a competition! ☹️).

Cast in a rough [mixed] tetrameter. I chose "unaffrighted" rather than "unafraid" to avoid any Stoic connotations. "Bountiful fest": following on "humble pleasures," trying to convey the notion of "enough is a feast" (one of my wife's favorite sayings).

Post by "Don" of November 13, 2022 at 3:26 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Unaffrighted by carefree gods,
untroubled by unfeeling death -

👍 I really like that you didn't go the imperative command route on these! No "do not..." just describing the situation. 👍

Post by "Cassius" of November 14, 2022 at 10:30 AM

I suppose I am the only one for whom the tune in the video below came to mind when I saw the title of the new Emily Austin book "[Living For Pleasure.](#)" 😊 (maybe not the best example of

the song but it has the words)

If we could convince Nate or someone else musically talented (Kalosyni? Others?) to come up with some better words then we might have something to accompany the thoughts in this thread about a "prayer" 😊

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZleXAqtvV8U>

Post by “Pacatus” of November 18, 2022 at 1:12 PM

At my wife’s request, we started using my attempt at a Tetrpharmicon Prayer/Meditation as a kind of “saying grace” at dinner. I realized that my overburdening wordplay made it quite cumbersome. So I simplified and generalized (still guilty of stretching the wordplay a bit: aiming at rhyme as a mnemonic aid, even if the rhymes have an archaic feel; and quasi-meter - not quite tetrameter, but each eight-syllable line ends with an iamb).

Instead of an “amen” I appended the Spanish “*¡Pura Vida! ¡Salud!*” as a kind of exclamation of good cheer. My wife and I usually toast, especially before a meal, with “*Salud!*” - and “*Pura Vida!*” (Pure Life!) is a popular phrase in Costa Rica, where it is used for everything from “Hello” to a response to the question “How are you doing?” to a cheer (we first were made aware of by the Costa Rican soccer fans some years ago while watching the World Cup on TV, who cheered with it and displayed it on banners).

It’s not quite the Tetrpharmicon, except by implication. I also try to use it in the morning to start the day.

+++++

An Epicurean Prayer Meditation

Unaffrighted by gods or fates,

a happy soul travail abates.

Easy fare makes bountiful fest,

and gratitude a Garden blest.

~ ~ ~

¡Pura Vida! ¡Salud!

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 18, 2022 at 1:19 PM

Finally something further came to me for this thread. A work in progress, and maybe more of a meditation rather than a prayer.

Epicurean Prayer for Self-guidance

May I remember to see the future as just as important as the present. May I remember that there is just this one life and to be fully present to it. May I trust that I will find solutions to all my challenges, and skillfully take actions to create my best life.

May I remember that actions of kindness, honesty, and patience especially when faced by challenges, are most likely to lead to better results for long-term happiness.

May I remember to seek out the help of trusted friends even when I think I am doing fine on my own. May I offer help to my trusted friends as an opportunity to strengthen the connection we share.

May I actively seek to find comfort and joy in daily moments of pleasant sensations. May I enjoy all the new things that I am learning about the world. May I remember to do the most important actions to live happily. (this last line, more to be added).

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 18, 2022 at 1:21 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Easy fare makes bountiful fest,
and gratitude a Garden blest.

Oh this is great for a meal prayer!

And that gets me thinking about what might I like to compose for a meal prayer. 😊

Post by “Charles” of November 18, 2022 at 1:26 PM

I'm reminded of a section in the opening chorus in Handel's Acis & Galatea.

For us the zephyr blows,

For us distills the dew,

For us unfolds the rose,

And flow'rs display their hue.

For us the winters rain,

For us the summers shine,

Spring swells for us the grain,

And autumn bleeds the wine.

Post by “Pacatus” of November 18, 2022 at 1:35 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Oh this is great for a meal prayer!

And that gets me thinking about what might I like to compose for a meal prayer. 😊

Thank you so much. Yes, I think these things need to be individualized because we will all feel it a bit differently.

And I really like your prayer/meditation for self-guidance. 😊