

Caesar the Epicurean - Bourne - 1977

Post by "Cassius" of September 22, 2020 at 8:22 AM

This thread is for discussion of Caesar as an Epicurean, with particular focus on the material contained in the article by Frank Bourne - "Caesar the Epicurean"

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This article contains many interesting points and can be read for free here:
https://www.jstor.org/stable/4...=1#page_scan_tab_contents

It's interesting to me that Bourne doesn't really deal with what I presumed to be the main issue - that there is no real record of Caesar calling himself an Epicurean - but he produces a long list of circumstantial evidence that seems very persuasive to me.

In fact the only real reason to doubt that Caesar was an Epicurean is the same "presumption" that all Epicureans were against involvement in politics, because once you deal with that by recognizing the contextual nature of such advice, the rest of Caesar's life does reveal numerous similarities, and the author documents.

I was familiar with the episode from the Cataline conspiracy where Caesar recommended against execution of the conspirators on the ground that that is really not as severe as long-term incarceration, so that makes sense to me, but the author doesn't attempt to make much of Caesar's father-in-law being the owner of the Epicurean library at Herculaneum, which also seems to me to be relevant.

But in general I think it's a very well written article packed with lots of references to Epicurean theory and good citations to how a life of activism CAN be consistent with Epicurean theory, if that's the type of person you are and that's the kind of thing you find pleasure in:

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So I see this as a very well written and useful article covering a lot of topics in one place.

Post by "Godfrey" of September 23, 2020 at 2:16 AM

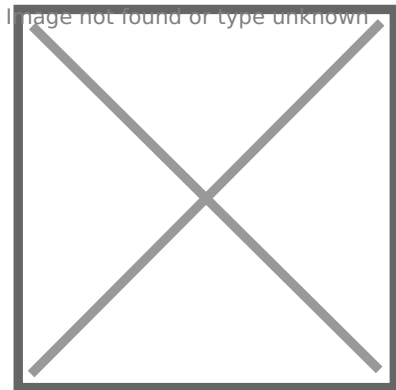
I had no idea: maybe I'll read up on Caesar.... The article is illuminating not just regarding Caesar and activism, but also has many examples of how to live as an Epicurean. It would be nice to find other lives to examine in this way.

Post by “Cassius” of September 23, 2020 at 3:53 AM

Godfrey:

It's not quite as impressive as this article, because its point was not to focus on his Epicurean aspects, but if you have not read it I think you will find [Cornelius Nepos' "Life of Atticus" article](#) to be a similar good source of info about what it can mean to live as an Epicurean.

Post by “Don” of March 19, 2022 at 6:52 AM



[Caesar the Epicurean? A Matter of Life and Death](#)

In *Epicurus in Rome: Philosophical Perspectives in the Ciceronian Age*, ed. by S. Yona and G. Davis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, pp. 72-86.
www.academia.edu

Another paper examining Caesar's possible Epicurean affinities.