

# Atheopaganism Commentary

Post by "Cassius" of January 12, 2021 at 6:59 AM

Jordan Crago recently posted an article "[Epicurean Atheopaganism](#)" on his blog "The Modern Epicurean." You can click through to read that article.

Elli and Elayne have written some lengthy and very good comments on Facebook, and I want to preserve those comments by pasting them here:

Quote

Elli wrote:

In this article we read : "The ancient Epicureans attended religious festivals, visited temples to offer prayers, and formed religious rituals within their communities: they celebrated the 20th of every month to honour Epicurus' birth, where they would come together and feast". Questions :

1. From where it comes (sources) this argument that Epicurus along with the ancient epicureans formed religious rituals inside the community of the Garden ?
2. What has to do the celebration of one's birthday with his friends with the practices of a religion?
3. What has to do practicing religiosity and prayers with the practicing in philosophy ?

Answers : VS65. It is pointless for a man to pray to the gods for that which he has the power to obtain by himself.

I recommend constant activity in the study of Nature i.e. I recommend constant activity in Physiology i.e. Physics, Gnosiology i.e. Canon that both are connected with scientific works, knowledges, and doings along with Ethics that is a way of life, which above all, respects the uniqueness of the person, but mostly is not connected with sacred orders or doings. And only the word "sacred" ethics it reminds me the sacred maxims in Delphi and sacred orders along with mysticism of the clergy. So, says Epicurus, the only I recommend is the constant activity in the study of Nature and in this way MORE than any other I enjoy calm in my life.

Another point in this article that I would like to comment: "Lucretius' conceptual or allegorical Venus is playing many roles in this hymn: she is the mother of Romans."

What ? only the Romans had a mother with the name Venus ? What about the other Nations? What is the name of the mother as goddess or the archetype of other Nations? Name her please.

If we want to play with the concepts of the words that are connected with symbols, archetypes and names, and if we connect the gods with a nation and the conquerors of Epicurus' nation, here it follows the conclusion that the victorious of wars impose to others the archetypes of gods that have in their minds. And if we would like to connect Lucretius' Venus as mother of Romans with the pleasure of the Romans that were the conquerors (historically proved) of the nation of Epicurus, the pleasure of Romans has nothing to do with the pleasure of Epicurus and his fellow compatriots.

And if we want to extent this more, here how comes the conclusion that the consequences of any practicing of religion is leading to wars and strife.

My above argument is based on this, that I would like to make it more clear : When Lucretius wrote his book DRN and it started with the hymn in Venus as a mother of Romans, his book was addressed to only one person, Memmius that was a Roman too. Lucretius did not have the intension to proselytize others in an archetype that has in his mind. He did not have the intension to impose the ideal and the archetype as a goddess with the name Venus to other Nations and the mob. So, the hymn to Venus by Lucretius and his pleasure, as connected with an archetype was a very personal issue for him and in extension to his known person as Memmius.

Sorry, I do not agree, we do not get along on the basis with practices in religiosity. Epicurus said it clearly:

The wise man gather together a SCHOOL, but even he gather together in a school, he never so as to become a leader of crowds.

"Atheopaganism" as a term includes the suffix-ism and declares that is an ideological system that has a leader and followers. Epicurean philosophy is not Epicureanism. No, it is not a system and never would be. It is a philosophy as a way of life that has no leaders and followers because above all it respects the uniqueness of the person in any place and in any Nation knowing and this : a man cannot become wise in every kind of physical constitution, or in every nation.

"I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them, the will to a system is a lack of integrity."  
— Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols

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Quote

Elayne wrote: I'm glad you decided to be Epicurean!

I have a few comments. On the idea that religion makes people happier (and this is measured as pleasedness so far as I've seen, the feeling and not an abstraction), this is not established. There are some correlations-- if one lives in a religious culture, there are some studies showing more happiness. The big confounding factors there could be differences in access to social capital, feeling like one fits in, and maybe being persecuted by religionists.

There is an association between extreme economic disparity and increased religiosity, which seems to be causal in that the disparity happens first, and when it is relieved, religiosity decreases.

There is a consistent correlation between higher IQ and lower religiosity. I don't know how that relates to happiness, but just an example of a potential confounder.

Countries with lower economic disparity and lower religiosity tend to be higher in happiness ratings than religious countries. Whether that's due to economics, atheism, or another factor, I don't know-- but it's at least evidence that religiosity isn't necessary for happiness  Image not found or type unknown

Second-- the atheopagan principle of pleasure being good IF it harms no one else is not Epicurean at all, and the difference is critical to understand. That's paganism-- "and it harm none"-- but it puts some other good, nonharming, higher than pleasure, because whatever limits a good must be more important.

EP doesn't say that. Most of us simply don't desire to harm others. It would cause us direct and immediate pain. Those of us who are less empathetic can be influenced by the prospect of being caught and punished. The result is usually still non-harming, but not always. Using pleasure quickly solves those issues like self defense, deadly defense for one's child, etc. Having the single top standard of pleasure prevents having to say there are exceptions to one's primary goal-- pleasure is always the goal.

Third, ataraxia does not mean a type of pleasure. It is the absence of mental distress. It doesn't describe the pleasure that is present anymore than absence of void describes matter. We do not put tranquility as some higher type of pleasure. Our goal is actually pleasure.

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Quote

Elli wrote:

As it well known, the latest agreeable definition of health is that is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

"Of the wise man" quotes we also read: "Even if the wise man should lose his eyesight, he will not end his whole life". And that is because as long as that wise man lives is able to feel pleasure and eudeamonia in his life.

The same with the definition of health, is for pleasure that is a feeling of complete physical, mental and well-being, and as Epicurus said it with the word "eudaemonia", and not merely the absence of the feeling of pain or the absence of tranquility.

But most of the people do not understand that Epicurus, with the usage of terms as aponia and ataraxia, was one of his efforts to show the limit of pleasure in the accusation that was done by Plato et al. who said that Pleasure is something that extents to infinite and can't be fulfilled as a feeling from anywhere, as they also said that pleasure is the goal of the profligates. For this Epicurus said and this also VS 59. It is not the stomach that is insatiable, as is generally said, but the false opinion that the stomach needs an unlimited amount to fill it.

And from Meneoceus : When therefore we say that pleasure is the end we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in high living, as certain people think, either not understanding us and holding to different views or willfully misrepresenting us; but we mean freedom from pain in the body and turmoil in the soul. For it is not protracted drinking bouts and revels nor yet sexual pleasures with boys and women nor rare dishes of fish and the rest - all the delicacies that the luxurious table bears - that beget the happy life but rather sober calculation, which searches out the reasons for every choice and avoidance and expels the false opinions, the source of most of the turmoil that seizes upon the souls of men.

A false opinion is that when someone prays to the gods, gods will get interest for his prayer, and without doing something more BENEFICIAL and PRACTICAL then suddenly he feels pleasure, when the whole society around him is collapsed from many other reasons e.g. the coronavirus... and he, what is he doing ? He just prays !

71. Every desire must be confronted by this question: what will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished and what if it is not ?

Just pray, and then be sure that you would find the right answer in the above question!  Image not found or type

Image may contain: text that says 'Corona Virus Prayer Dear God, I pray for healing to all affected by this c

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**Post by “Don” of January 12, 2021 at 7:54 AM**

Thanks for posting these, [Cassius](#) . And thanks to Elli and Elayne for their in-depth responses (some of which I wholeheartedly agree). I'm looking forward to reading the original article.

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 12, 2021 at 8:22 AM**

Thanks Don. There are some significant issues with parts (not all) of the article, as Elli's and Elayne's posts point out, but there are some good parts too and that's part of what we're here for -- to discuss things and help clarify issues for everyone.

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**Post by “Charles” of January 12, 2021 at 1:50 PM**

These are great, loved what Elli had to say. Thanks for posting these responses.

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**Post by “Don” of January 12, 2021 at 3:54 PM**

Reading Philodemus's *On Piety* and Obbink's commentary has given me an entirely new perspective on Epicurus's participation in the religious and ritual life of his day. So, with that as preface:

By Zeus! I found [JC RAGO](#) 's article an interesting read and overall didn't see anything overly concerning. I think he provides ample justification for the practices he outlines, especially in keeping with Epicurus's and the founders' participation in the festivals and rites of their day and Lucretius's metaphorical language.

That 10th Principle of Atheopaganism he references seems in keeping with [Principal Doctrines](#) 31-33 to not harm nor be harmed.

I would have avoided the term "religiosity." That has negative connotations.

I may have additional comments, but - Paian Anax! - I think he may be on to something.

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## Post by "Elli" of January 15, 2021 at 6:33 PM

### [Quote from Don](#)

- Paian Anax! - I think he may be on to something.

Hi Don,

With the "Paian Anax" you remind me a post with a photo that I've posted on FB, last year. 😊

Diogenes Laertius, in the biography of Epicurus, mentions a small fragment of a letter by Epicurus to Leontion who was the wife of Metrodorus. However, and as I read by some translators, in greek language, they make the mistake to translate that Epicurus calls Leontion as "healer and king". No, this is not right. Epicurus here mentions two of the titles that the God Apollon had in Ancient Greece.

Apóllôn as PAEAN Paián - (Gr. Παιάν, pronounced pay-AHN.) means the physician, healer, savior. Who that cares and helps, and, as such, he is the principal deity of Medicine and Healing for which he is called Paián (Paeon, Παιάν). The Κάενταυρος (Centaur, Κένταυρος) Kheirôn (Chirôn, Χείρων) taught medicine to Asklipiós (Asclepius, Ἄσκληπιός), who is the son of Apóllôn and the most renowned physician after him. Asklipiós in turn, taught his own sons and daughters medicine, a whole host of healers. Apóllôn is mentioned first in the Hippocratic Oath:

"I swear by Apollon the physician, and Asclepius (Ἄσκληπιός), and Health (Ἰγεία), and All-heal (Πανάκεια), and all the Gods and Goddesses, that, according to my ability and judgment, I will keep this Oath..."

Apóllôn as Anax : - (Gr. Ἄναξ, ANAΞ) it means the king. He is the ambassador of the Olympian Gods of the Solar System and as such, he is on the level of Zeus and thereby worthy the title as Ánax. Apóllôn is also sympárædros (συμπάρεδρος) to Zeus meaning that they hold the throne jointly. The Solar Powers are represented by the two intertwined snakes of the Kîrýkeion (Caduceus or Cêryceion, Κηρύκειον, one of the major symbols of Zeus) which Apollon gives to the other god named as Hermês (Ἑρμῆς).

However, the symbol of the "caduceus" as it is used by the physicians in the USA is wrong. The link between the caduceus of Hermes (Mercury) and medicine seems to have arisen by the seventh century A.D. when Hermes had come to be linked with alchemy. Alchemists were referred to as the sons of Hermes, as Hermetists or Hermeticists and as "practitioners of the hermetic arts". There are clear occult associations with the caduceus.

The caduceus was the magic staff of Hermes (Mercury), the god of commerce, eloquence, invention, travel and theft, and so was a symbol of heralds and commerce, not medicine. The words caducity & caducous imply temporality, perishableness, and senility, while the medical profession espouses renewal, vitality, and health.

The right symbol of Asclepius (in the attached picture) and as it used by greek physicians is with a snake that is entwined on a rod, as well as, the pharmacists that have a snake entwined on a cup.