

An Epicurean Understanding of Valentine's Day: Love, Romance, and Free-will

Post by "Kalosyni" of January 16, 2022 at 1:19 AM

Valentine's Day is one month away...how do we make sense of romance and love within the "Epicurean worldview". Is romantic love in direct opposition of the wisdom of free-will?

Quote

Diogenes Laertius :

Book 10, Sections 84-154

"They do not think that the wise man will ever be in love, nor that he will be anxious about his burial, nor that love is a passion inspired by the gods, as Diogenes says in his twelfth book. They also assert that he will be indifferent to the study of oratory. Intercourse, say they, is never any good to a man, and we must be quite content if it does no harm; [119] [G](#) and the wise man will never marry or beget children, as Epicurus himself lays it down, in his Problems and in his treatises on Nature. Still, under certain circumstances of life, he will forsake these rules and marry."

[Diogenes Laertius: Principal Doctrines of Epicurus](#)

And yet, is Venus standing at the center of the Epicurean Garden?

Lucretius begins his *De rerum natura* (On the Nature of Things) with a dedication to Venus:

Quote

Address to Venus

By [Lucretius](#)

Delight of Human kind, and Gods above;
Parent of Rome; Propitious Queen of Love;
Whose vital pow'r, Air, Earth, and Sea supplies;
And breeds what e'r is born beneath the rowling Skies:
For every kind, by thy prolifiquè might,

Springs, and beholds the Regions of the light:
Thee, Goddess thee, the clouds and tempests fear,
And at thy pleasing presence disappear:
For thee the Land in fragrant Flow'rs is drest,
For thee the Ocean smiles, and smooths her wavy breast;
And Heav'n it self with more serene, and purer light is blest.
For when the rising Spring adorns the Mead,
And a new Scene of Nature stands display'd,
When teeming Budds, and chearful greens appear,
And Western gales unlock the lazy year,
The joyous Birds thy welcome first express,
Whose native Songs thy genial fire confess:
Then savage Beasts bound o're their slighted food,
Strook with thy darts, and tempt the raging floud:
All Nature is thy Gift; Earth, Air, and Sea:
Of all that breathes, the various progeny,
Stung with delight, is goaded on by thee.
O'er barren Mountains, o'er the flow'ry Plain,
The leavy Forest, and the liquid Main
Extends thy uncontroul'd and boundless reign.
Through all the living Regions dost thou move,
And scattr'st, where thou goest, the kindly seeds of Love:
Since then the race of every living thing,
Obeys thy pow'r; since nothing new can spring
Without thy warmth, without thy influence bear,
Or beautiful, or lovesome can appear,
Be thou my ayd: My tuneful Song inspire,
And kindle with thy own productive fire;
While all thy Province Nature, I survey,
And sing to Memmius an immortal lay
Of Heav'n, and Earth, and every where thy wond'rous pow'r display.
To Memmius, under thy sweet influence born,
Whom thou with all thy gifts and graces dost adorn.
The rather, then assist my Muse and me,
Infusing Verses worthy him and thee.
Mean time on Land and Sea let barb'rous discord cease,
And lull the listening world in universal peace.
To thee, Mankind their soft repose must owe,
For thou alone that blessing canst bestow;
Because the brutal business of the War
Is manag'd by thy dreadful Servant's care:

Who oft retires from fighting fields, to prove
The pleasing pains of thy eternal Love:
And panting on thy breast, supinely lies,
While with thy heavenly form he feeds his famish'd eyes:
Sucks in with open lips, thy balmy breath,
By turns restor'd to life, and plung'd in pleasing death.
There while thy curling limbs about him move,
Involv'd and fetter'd in the links of Love,
When wishing all, he nothing can deny,
Thy charms in that auspicious moment try;
With winning eloquence our peace implore,
And quiet to the weary World restore.

Display More



Aphrodite of Menophantos, a Venus pudica ("modest venus") the best-known copy type of the Venus of Cnidus, here bearing the signature of the sculptor Menophantos: "work by Menophantos, after the Aphrodite in the Troad". Marble, Greek artwork, 1st century BC. From the church San Gregorio al Celio, Rome.
https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Venus_pudica_Massimo.jpg

Is this to be seen as a reverence for nature and the natural world, rather than a reverence for romantic love?

Post by “Don” of January 16, 2022 at 6:47 AM

[The Internet Classics Archive | On the Nature of Things by Lucretius](#)

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

Quote

And here, whoso

Decides to call the ocean Neptune, or

The grain-crop Ceres, and prefers to abuse

The name of Bacchus rather than pronounce

The liquor's proper designation, him

Let us permit to go on calling earth

Mother of Gods, if only he will spare

To taint his soul with foul religion.

Display More

We should always remember that Lucretius is using the Greek gods' names metaphorically, as he describes in Book 2 above.

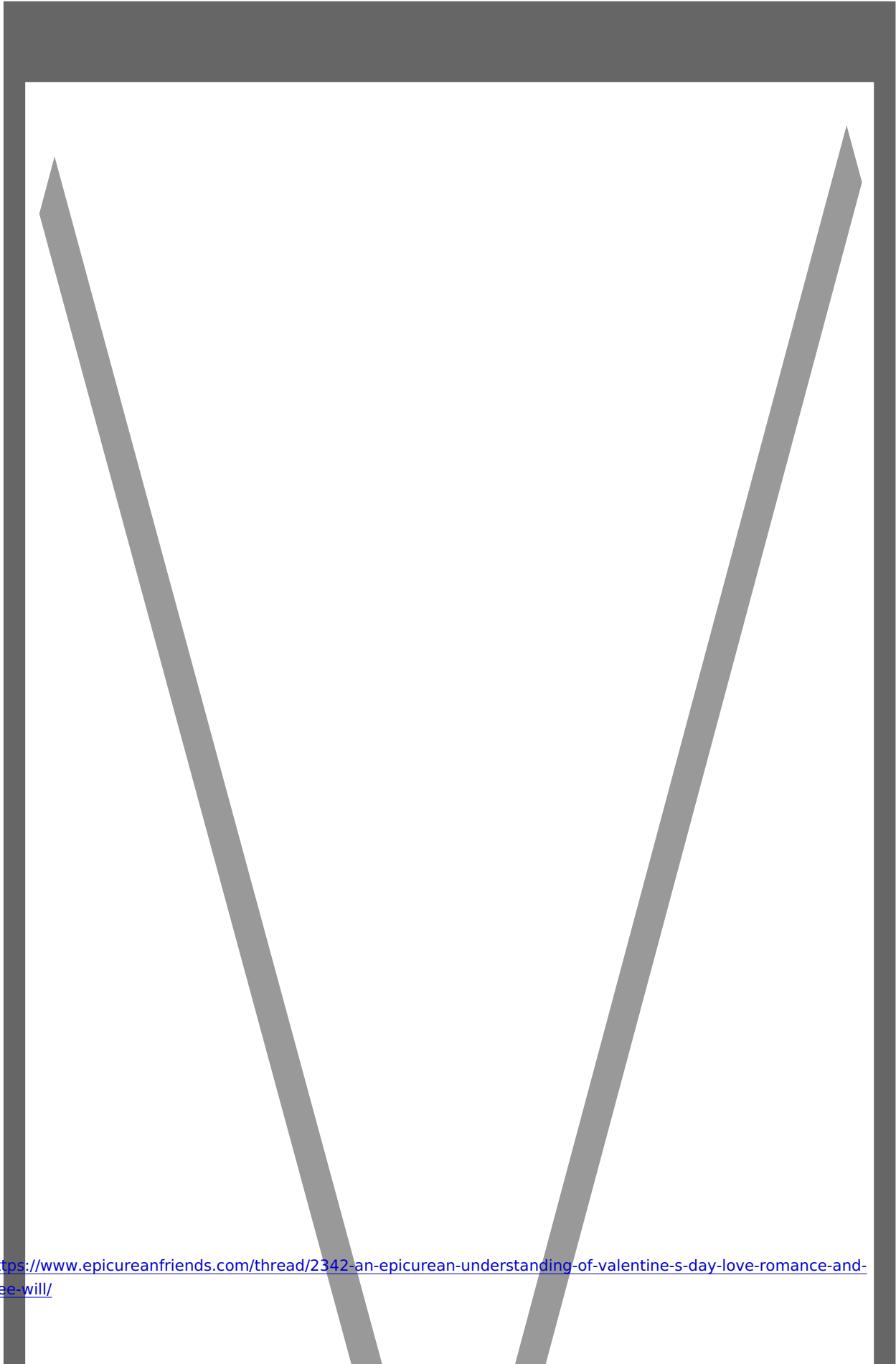
[Aphrodite and the Gods of Love: Worship \(Getty Villa Exhibitions\)](#)

This is the first time I've ever seen one aspect of Aphrodite be named "Aphrodite en kepois" (Aphrodite in the gardens).

<https://www.theoi.com/Cult/AphroditeCult.html>

This page seems to imply there was a shrine of Aphrodite kepois in or near the Kerameikos district of ancient Athens. Where was the Garden of Epicurus? In the Kerameikos. Coincidence? Pausanias was writing in the 2nd c. CE.

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[Aphrodite of the Gardens - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

I realize this is a bit of a tangent so I apologize for that. To get back on track, here's my take on the characteristics of the sage as it pertains to this topic:

[Epicurean Sage - Sexual Relationships](#)

I have tried to use the most literal translations of the Greek words here for more impact. Some translations use "marriage" or "fall in love" for words in the...

sites.google.com

PS: Having looked at that Pausanias excerpt closer, maybe I spoke too soon. Here are the two sections in Pausanias where he talks about Aphrodite in the gardens:

[Pausanias, Description of Greece, Attica, chapter 27](#)

[Pausanias, Description of Greece, Attica, chapter 19](#)

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2022 at 9:19 AM

Thank you for starting this thread and thanks for the text references. This is a huge area of interest for most people and we really need to explore this.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 16, 2022 at 12:32 PM

Thank you [Don](#) for sharing your "Epicurean Sage" translations...very helpful to read.

So...we could do an intellectual assessment of the historical context of male/female (or even male/male) relationships back in Epicurus' time...because it's quite fascinating how different things were, for people in ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

But for now maybe let's stay with love and romance in modern times...

Here is an interesting song by a band called "Sweet" that I came across just last year (this song was shortly before my generation of music)...I am focusing specifically on the chorus (and not on the verses).

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=zRgWvVkSvfk>

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

"Love is like oxygen,
You get too much,
You get too high,
Not enough,
And your gonna die."

So thinking about just these words...this talks about a human need. And also the need for having the best amount of love. But there is "sexual love" and "non-sexual love"...romance or friendship...and in modern times we can sometimes have a mix of both (a very rare thing in the form of a "situationship"). And certainly for married couples the best hoped for situation is a mix of romance and friendship.

Since we are talking about Valentine's Day, I am excluding from this discussion "family love" which would be a type of friendship, such as between siblings, or adult parents being friends with adult children. I am also excluding the "non-sexual" -- "love-as-a-duty"...when there is a mix of the feeling of duty and caring...the feeling of caring but not necessarily loving. (Yet there could be a mix of caring and loving).

The word "love" itself becomes very complicated because of all it's forms.

Also it is important to exclude "love as infatuation" since this is based on the imagination and is not based on reality...except...wait a minute 🤔 ...isn't this what Valentine's Day is all about??? And so many millions of modern love songs, are all describing the "love as infatuation" kind of romantic love. Is this "passionate love" the very thing of human sexual reproduction...we must submit to this inaccurate mixed up state of mind in order to procreate? Perhaps this is how it is for us now, but back in Epicurus' time marriage was not for love and romance, but only for having children.

Now popping back into thinking about the original Epicurean Garden...was there an emphasis on friendship as a substitute for "romantic" entanglements? Was there an emphasis on friendship based on the study of philosophy? Were there rules against the kind of romantic entanglements that might have been going on back then...romantic relationships with courtesans and also paiserastia (yikes! way too complicated for me).

So maybe we better bring it back to modern times...would a modern Epicurean think: if you are married, then that's fine...stay married (if your marriage is working out fine) and if you are single, then stay single because you will find more "love" (of the friendship variety) amongst a group of friends than by going off with one person.

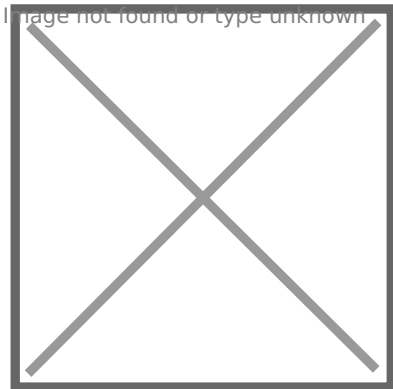
But then this does bring up the question of friendship. As in modern times we can have very deep friendships, or just very shallow superficial friendships.

Does anyone know if Philodemus wrote anything on friendships?

Would love to hear comments on anything I have written here 😊

Post by “Don” of January 16, 2022 at 12:44 PM

Just found this in Academia. Just read the first few paragraphs, but I found the author's note on translation of DL 10.118 and VS51 intriguing!



[Epicurus on Sex, Marriage, and Children](#)

Argues for the correct understanding of two fragments of Epicurean ethics. Changes text of one fragment (change substantially accepted in Marcovich's 1999...

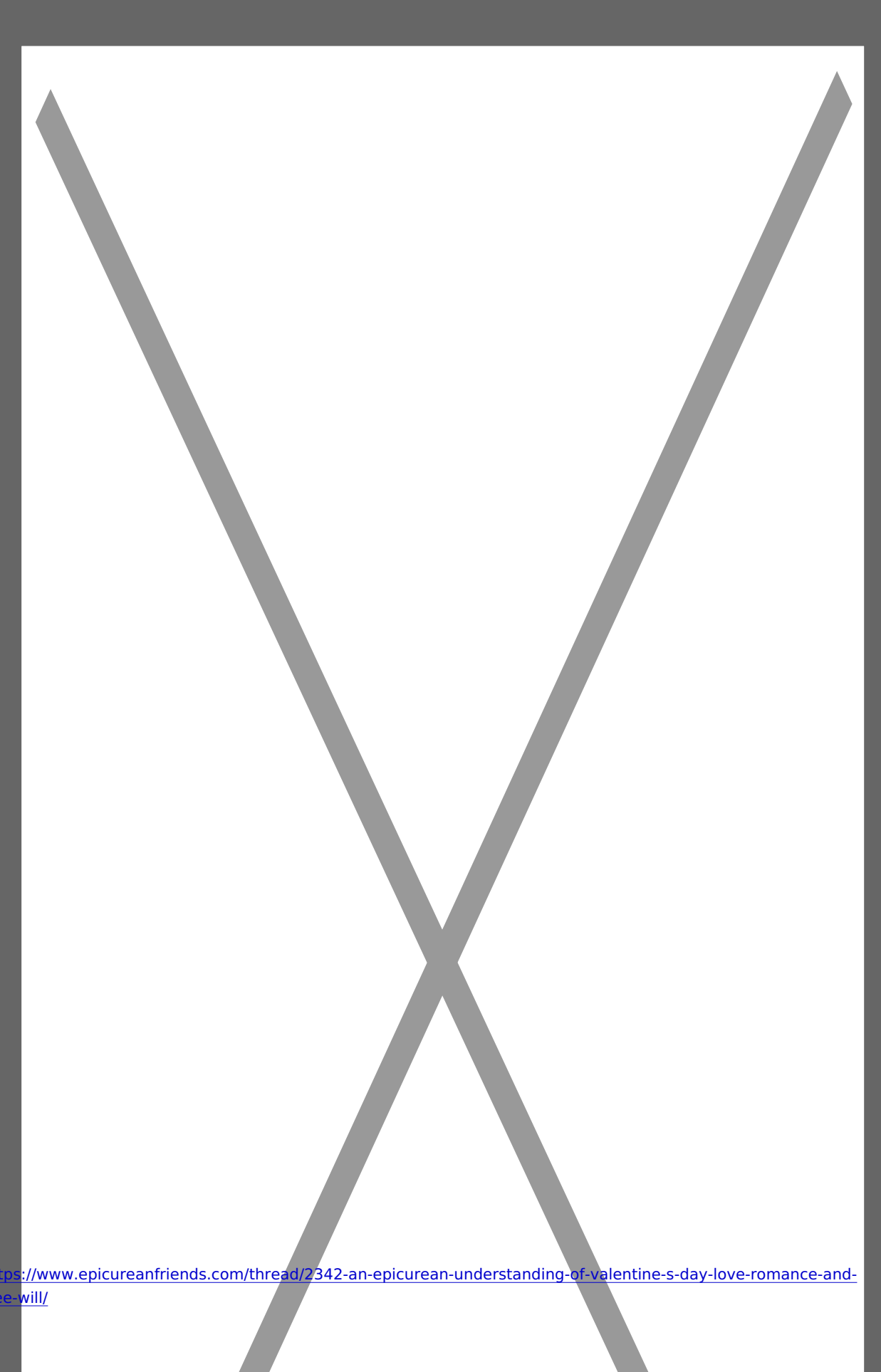
www.academia.edu

Post by “Don” of January 16, 2022 at 12:52 PM

Thought this might be helpful too

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[Greek words for love - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

I'll look forward to digging into your post as well!

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2022 at 1:06 PM

At some point we need to bring in the specific text material from Lucretius. Also, in terms of marriage in Epicurus' own context, we need to be sure we keep grounded in Epicurus' will, in which he provided for the marriage of Metrodorus' daughter.

As for "Sweet" being before your generation, that's one of the burdens of being old like I am. I remember very clearly that song playing on the radio when it first came out!

Post by “Don” of January 16, 2022 at 1:11 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

The word "love" itself becomes very complicated because of all its forms.

Couldn't agree more on that. I always come back to the ability of English to say each of the following:

I love ice cream.

I love my spouse.

I love my children.

I love my grandma.

I love my friends.

I love reading.

etc.

An abundance of nuance is packed into that one four-letter word "love." It does a lot of heavy lifting in our language!

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

Post by “Don” of January 16, 2022 at 1:19 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

in terms of marriage in Epicurus' own context, we need to be sure we keep grounded in Epicurus' will, in which he provided for the marriage of Metrodorus' daughter.

That is not a lot to go on. To expand the view to the earliest Epicureans, I submit this excerpt from Metrodorus's Wikipedia entry (emphasis added):

Quote

Metrodorus died in 278/7 BC, in the 53rd year of his age, seven years before Epicurus, who would have appointed him his successor had he survived him. He left behind him a son named Epicurus, and a daughter, whom Epicurus, in his will, entrusted to the guardianship of Amynomachus and Timocrates of Potamus, to be brought up under the joint care of themselves and Hermarchus, and provided for out of the property which he left behind him. In a letter also which he wrote upon his death-bed, Epicurus commended the children to the care of Idomeneus, who had married Batis, the sister of Metrodorus. The 20th of each month was kept by the disciples of Epicurus as a festive day in honour of their master and Metrodorus. Leontion is spoken of as the wife or mistress of Metrodorus.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 16, 2022 at 1:29 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

in terms of marriage in Epicurus' own context, we need to be sure we keep grounded in Epicurus' will, in which he provided for the marriage of Metrodorus' daughter.

That in itself doesn't prove any position on marriage. It was just the prudent and compassionate thing to do, because back then all respectable women were married...all unmarried women would have been either a courtesan or a prostitute. But for men, they could live unmarried and not be stigmatized.

It seems that the only way to solve this puzzle for modern times, is to use a hedonic calculus. But then how do you determine the outcome with regard to pleasure and pain? This simply

could be a subjective feeling, so some people might decide that marriage results in too much pain and so will not get married...or if divorced they will not seek to get re-married. But the problem is that you sometimes can't predict the outcome. And then this: is it worth experiencing an extreme amount of emotional pain so that you can enjoy some brief times of emotional (and physical) pleasure?

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 16, 2022 at 1:39 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Just found this in Academia. Just read the first few paragraphs,

Reading further, the author of that article concludes that the traditional translation is the right one:

Quote

Until very weighty evidence is brought forward to the contrary, it seems to me that we should feel confident that the traditional translation is the right one: sex is never beneficial, and you are lucky if it doesn't actually harm you-by implication, it usually does. The sentence does not say "sex is desirable"; the syntax does not connect those two words. As to Cicero's translation, I reluctantly conclude that he, like Purinton, simply got it wrong.

Post by “Don” of January 16, 2022 at 1:48 PM

I'll need to read that closer then! Thanks for that! You were quicker than I was.

I will say that I'm always a little skeptical of phrases like:

" As to Cicero's translation, I reluctantly conclude that he, like Purinton, simply got it wrong."

Purinton is modern, but Cicero was much closer to the source material than we are. He even knew practicing Epicureans! I'm not so sure his translation should be summarily dismissed as "simply getting it wrong."

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 16, 2022 at 2:07 PM

Examining the meaning of: "Sex is never beneficial, and you are lucky if it doesn't actually harm you."

From a modern understanding...what kind of "harm" are we talking about now, in our times?

Without birth control and condom use, sex can lead to pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases - so if you want to avoid those harms you must be scrupulous in your birth control and STD protection methods.

And also more importantly, from sex, some emotional consequences will be felt...which can become complicated if you are not in a committed relationship. (Casual sex will result in it's own type of emotional consequences, but since we are talking about Valentine's Day and "romance" and "love", I will exclude discussing modern casual sex, which is only practiced by a very small percentage of the population anyway).

I would say that the emotional consequences of sex within a committed relationship are "addiction" and a drive to protect what you have...so "attachment"...which can lead to fear of losing what you love, and jealousy. And then you are in a very precarious place within yourself...you are less free...but these are just some ideas, haven't thought this through very much yet. It is possible that in the right situation, you will not end up with the negative emotions of over-attachment, but you can only prevent this if both people in the relationship are very emotionally mature and grounded.

So most people choose to have children and also do so within the legal protections of marriage. And modern marriage is a big subject, which I think would be better discussed by someone who is both married and happily married.

Post by “Matt” of January 16, 2022 at 2:50 PM



<https://youtu.be/8oiXpHojBjg>

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2022 at 3:44 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

It seems that the only way to solve this puzzle for modern times, is to use a hedonic calculus. But then how do you determine the outcome with regard to pleasure and pain? This simply could be a subjective feeling, so some people might decide that marriage results in too much pain and so will not get married...or if divorced they will not seek to get re-married. But the problem is that you sometimes can't predict the outcome. And then this: is it worth experiencing an extreme amount of emotional pain so that you can enjoy some brief times of emotional (and physical) pleasure?

This is the reasoning I would use to come to a conclusion as to what Epicurus would most likely have endorsed at the end of his life (meaning in his most mature teaching). The way to solve this puzzle or any other puzzle is the hedonic calculus.

Every question is decided by [VS71](#). "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?"

Is the topic sex, or is it "romantic love," or is it marriage, or is "having children," or something else? It's easy to stray away from a precise question and to think that the answer to one might be the answer to the other.

A lot of the advice in Lucretius is geared toward the issue of "romanticizing" one's love interest (likely viewed as a form of intoxication) and how to sober yourself up. I won't quote all that here, but everyone needs to review the full statement by Lucretius starting at around line 1060 ([here is the link to it in Bailey](#)).

It would seem to me that Epicurus would say that while intoxication itself can have significant pleasure, what happens afterward is frequently more painful than pleasurable, so you had better be extremely cautious about being intoxicated.

Is that a flat ban against marriage, or children, or sex, or romance? I would say "clearly not." Is it a statement that these activities are some of the riskiest in life where the benefit/detriment ration can frequently go out of control and veer toward a very negative result? I would say again the answer is clear - "yes."

But just as firmly as I would say that it is a very un-Epicurean generalization that Epicurus taught us to avoid pain at all costs, and thereby live an ascetic life, I don't think he would have taught to adopt the general rule of avoiding romantic love, sex, marriage, and children.

And viewed from that perspective, like everything else in life, I think he would have said to be extremely careful handling dynamite (for example), but that if you are confident you can handle the dynamite to blast open new roads, build dams, and do things that you are confident will make your life better than otherwise, then it would certainly prudent for you to do so.

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2022 at 3:55 PM

Here is the conclusion of the BRENNAN article which I will also attach here (sorry that this clip does not pick up the greek, so I will post a picture too):

Quote

But that something like this is right seems to me overwhelmingly plausible. We should count it pure gain to rid ourselves of "6iaTpa7rtcsicOaO"t and the monstrous fragment (frag. 591 Us.) that it spawned. No longer must we suppose that the Epicurean sage "turns aside from his purpose," or "feels shame in the presence of others"-both of them incredible claims for any school to make about its sage.

Instead, we have a perfectly natural continuation of the earlier discussion, which shows that the exceptional circumstances recognized in the case of marriage were also recognized in the case of child-rearing-exactly what Epicurus' own will tells us.

The evidence of the will thus coheres with our emendation of the text, and with the earlier alteration of Kai lpv to Kai Tr&5 or 06?? ptfv. All of these passages support the view that Epicurus was on record as advising, in general, against marriage and childrearing. But he also clearly thought that there were exceptions that justified both institutions, at least for certain Epicureans. And he was on record as saying this, too-perhaps in explicit comments in theoretical treatises, but at least through the contents of his will-so that later Epicureans had to incorporate this into their account of the master's views. I think that they were right to do so; nothing in the structure of Epicurean hedonism could justify the blanket prohibition.

TAD BRENNAN

King's College, London

The syntactical demand is slightly greater; we must take the future passive with the active or middle sense. While this usage is attested for many other verbs, *τρέπω* among them as we saw above, I have been unable to find a parallel for it with *τρέφω*. But I do not take this as a decisive strike against the emendation. Usage is fluid, and users follow the pattern of similar words in extending anomalies to new cases. The grammarian who feels that *τραπήσασθαι* simply cannot take a middle sense may try other routes. For instance, *τινάς* may originally have been *τινά*, even *τινός*,¹⁸ in which cases the subject switches from the sage to the children, as it does in the passage of Epictetus above.

But that something like this is right seems to me overwhelmingly plausible. We should count it pure gain to rid ourselves of “*διατραπήσασθαι*” and the monstrous fragment (frag. 591 Us.) that it spawned. No longer must we suppose that the Epicurean sage “turns aside from his purpose,” or “feels shame in the presence of others”—both of them incredible claims for any school to make about its sage. Instead, we have a perfectly natural continuation of the earlier discussion, which shows that the exceptional circumstances recognized in the case of marriage were also recognized in the case of child-rearing—exactly what Epicurus’ own will tells us.

The evidence of the will thus coheres with our emendation of the text, and with the earlier alteration of *Καὶ μὴν* to *Καὶ μηδὲ* or *Οὐδὲ μὴν*. All of these passages support the view that Epicurus was on record as advising, in general, against marriage and childrearing. But he also clearly thought that there were exceptions that justified both institutions, at least for certain Epicureans. And he was on record as saying this, too—perhaps in explicit comments in theoretical treatises, but at least through the contents of his will—so that later Epicureans had to incorporate this into their account of the master’s views. I think that they were right to do so; nothing in the structure of Epicurean hedonism could justify the blanket prohibition.¹⁹

TAD BRENNAN
King’s College, London

In conclusion on this article, even though it is closer to my view, I think that it goes too far to say in English that Epicurus was likely to have been “on record as advising, in general, against marriage and childrearing.”

I think the most likely-to-be-accurate statement would be that Epicurus was: “on record as advising, in general, *about the risks and dangers* of marriage and childrearing.”

The final statement, that “nothing in the structure of Epicurean hedonism could justify the blanket prohibition,” is almost surely correct, since I think you could go further and say that

""nothing in the structure of Epicurean hedonism could justify the blanket prohibition" of any pleasure, because the proper formulation would be that on the other hand we do not choose every pleasure, because some actions can be expected to bring more pain than pleasure.

Post by "Matt" of January 16, 2022 at 4:28 PM

As far as kids go. It's definitely a personal choice that has to be right for the person. I've met many who don't have kids either by choice or by nature and they are perfectly happy in their lives. I've met plenty of happy people with kids, but also unhappy people. For me, having my daughters has been a paradigm shifting life changer. My happiness and pleasure is now tied to them. When I was single and without children, I would pursue my individual pleasure particularly in the "dating" world above most other pleasures, but now nature has put me in charge of these little ones. I'm only as "happy" as my saddest kid. So I'm tied to them.

Co-parenting and "romance" are pretty far apart on the Venn diagram in general. They can join up, but in general the roles change entirely once the wee ones appear.

Post by "Don" of January 16, 2022 at 4:43 PM

[Epicurus: Fragments - translation](#)

I keep coming back to Usener Fragment 67:

"For I at least do not even know what I should conceive the good to be, if I eliminate the pleasures of taste, and eliminate the pleasures of sex, and eliminate the pleasures of listening, and eliminate the pleasant motions caused in our vision by a visible form."

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2022 at 4:48 PM

And I think there Matt you are introducing the very difficult but very important issue of cultural and gender rules and norms that vary greatly over time. I don't need to be more specific than to note that there is fierce disagreement over whether there is a single correct attitude toward

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these topics -- whether our current societal norms in 2022 in the West are better or worse than those of 200 BC Athens. We can debate those issues "til kingdom come" and never arrive at a consensus solution.

But the point is that Epicurus was very clear that we should challenge and not accept on authority whether cultural norms are to be accepted by us individually or not. All of us are influenced by prevailing norms, and also we are aware of historical differences, and the possibility that things may change in the future. The reality for us is that we only have one life to live, and we have to make choices in the present as to what will lead to more or less pleasure and pain.

I think if Epicurus were here today he would probably say the same thing now as then: that giving in to cultural norms without examining them and deciding whether we will ultimately be happy that we chose to follow them or not is a very im-prudent method of proceeding.

Post by “Don” of January 16, 2022 at 4:54 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think if Epicurus were here today he would probably say

These kind of statements always make me a little uneasy. The only speaking Epicurus is doing today is through his extant writings. I realize we need to interpret what we have, but I'd just advise treading carefully when putting words in Epicurus's mouth.

I'm not saying I necessarily disagree, but just adding that caveat.

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2022 at 4:57 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I keep coming back to Usener Fragment 67:

"For I at least do not even know what I should conceive the good to be, if I eliminate the pleasures of taste, and eliminate the pleasures of sex, and eliminate the pleasures of listening, and eliminate the pleasant motions caused in our vision by a visible form."

I wasn't sure which fragment you were going to cite, Don, when I started reading your post, so I was getting ready to pull the trigger on another "always be prudent about pulling quotes out of context post" ----

But this particular fragment is so utterly and broadly and obviously consistent with the rest of the philosophy, and seems to me to be so strongly compelled by the epistemology and the ethics and the physics all at the same time, that I think it really is among those that is the most basic and unchallengeable.

Any legitimate concept of "the good" in Epicurean terms is ultimately and intimately tied to our feelings of pleasure and pain that occur when we engage in it. We don't accept good and bad by a priori formulas and logical reasoning about what "should" be the result of something, especially since there is no "fate" that predetermines outcomes in most human affairs (with the exception of such things as death). Our relations with our friends and family and opposite sex aren't pre-determined liked death, and it seems to me that each one is going to be an individual matter of "hedonic calculus" .

But DARN I hate the words "hedonic" and "hedonic calculus." It's much more accurate to say something like "Epicurean calculus." The philosophy is EPICUREAN philosophy, not "Pleasurism" -- we frequently (and ought to always!) choose short-term pain over short-term pleasure when greater pleasure in the end is the result of the choice. Yes in the end it comes down to pleasure over pain, and pleasure is the goal and the end, but in common communication the word "Epicurean" conveys the result a lot more accurately than does "hedonic."

Post by "Matt" of January 16, 2022 at 5:40 PM

From my personal perspective...and this is just me, the animal brain speaking, my entire "romance" life has been dictated by chemical impulses. When I was 23 I wasn't thinking that any one of these "pursuits" would end up in a family, in fact I had no ambition or drive for that. Nor was there any pressure from my family etc. I was purely following instinctual urges...often without prudence, I don't think nature cares too much about whether we are prudent, but rather holds up the carrot to get the job done. But I was a pawn in a much larger and older game than any philosophy, ideology or cultural idea of what's normal...about a billion year old game, that for all intents and purposes continues to play every moment of every day across the globe...from humans to single celled organisms.

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2022 at 6:17 PM

[Quote from Matt](#)

my entire "romance" life has been dictated by chemical impulses.

That is why I think it is a good analogy to consider what Epicurus was warning about here to be akin to "intoxication."

If Lucretius' section on this topic is reflective of the mature Epicurean position, and I think that it very likely is, then it seems to me that Lucretius is making clear that the benefits of these topics can be achieved in a prudent way without getting burned.

And that's very similar to the observation that the benefits of alcohol can be enjoyed by most people if we do so prudently to avoid everything from terrible hangovers to killing someone else - or ourselves - through drunk driving.

But even there again we should shy away from "universalization" -- some people are apparently so wired biologically that they suffer far more from the intoxicating effects of alcohol than others, so each person's "constitution" has to be taken into account in deciding how much of the activity to engage in.

Post by "Don" of January 16, 2022 at 7:09 PM

Since [Kalosyni](#) was kind enough to start this thread, I wanted to directly respond to some of her posts:

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Love is like oxygen,

You get too much,

You get too high,

Not enough,

And your gonna die."

So thinking about just these words...this talks about a human need.

Display More

I do find it interesting that the oxygen analogy is used. I can't remember the song context (although I did remember the song!) and whether we're talking eros or philia or another flavor of "love." However, even Epicurus seems to caution a balance between intoxication (as [Cassius](#) has mentioned) and no love at all. He certainly didn't prohibit it in his students. Some of his handpicked closest students and fellow teachers in the Garden were married and had children. He expressed (friendly) affection for Themista, the wife of Leonteus. If Epicurus had a completely negative view of sex or romantic love or marriage, I find it hard to believe he'd allow a number of his students to engage in the activity. So maybe you do need just "enough."

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

From a modern understanding...what kind of "harm" are we talking about now, in our times?

Oh, all kinds of psychological harm for sure. Romantic entanglements can lead to all kinds of problems. Let's say one partner falls out of love, but the other partner doesn't accept that. If one partner cheats on the other. If one partner gets in trouble and drags the other one into a dangerous situation or legal problems. And so on and so on. I can envision all kinds of harms, Ancient and modern.

(Let me clearly state: I'm not talking from experience! I'm quite happy and blessed! 😊)

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2022 at 7:51 PM

Yes thanks again to Kalosyni for starting the thread. This will prove to be the raw material for what will eventually be a recorded "roundtable" or similar media presentation on the subject at some point.

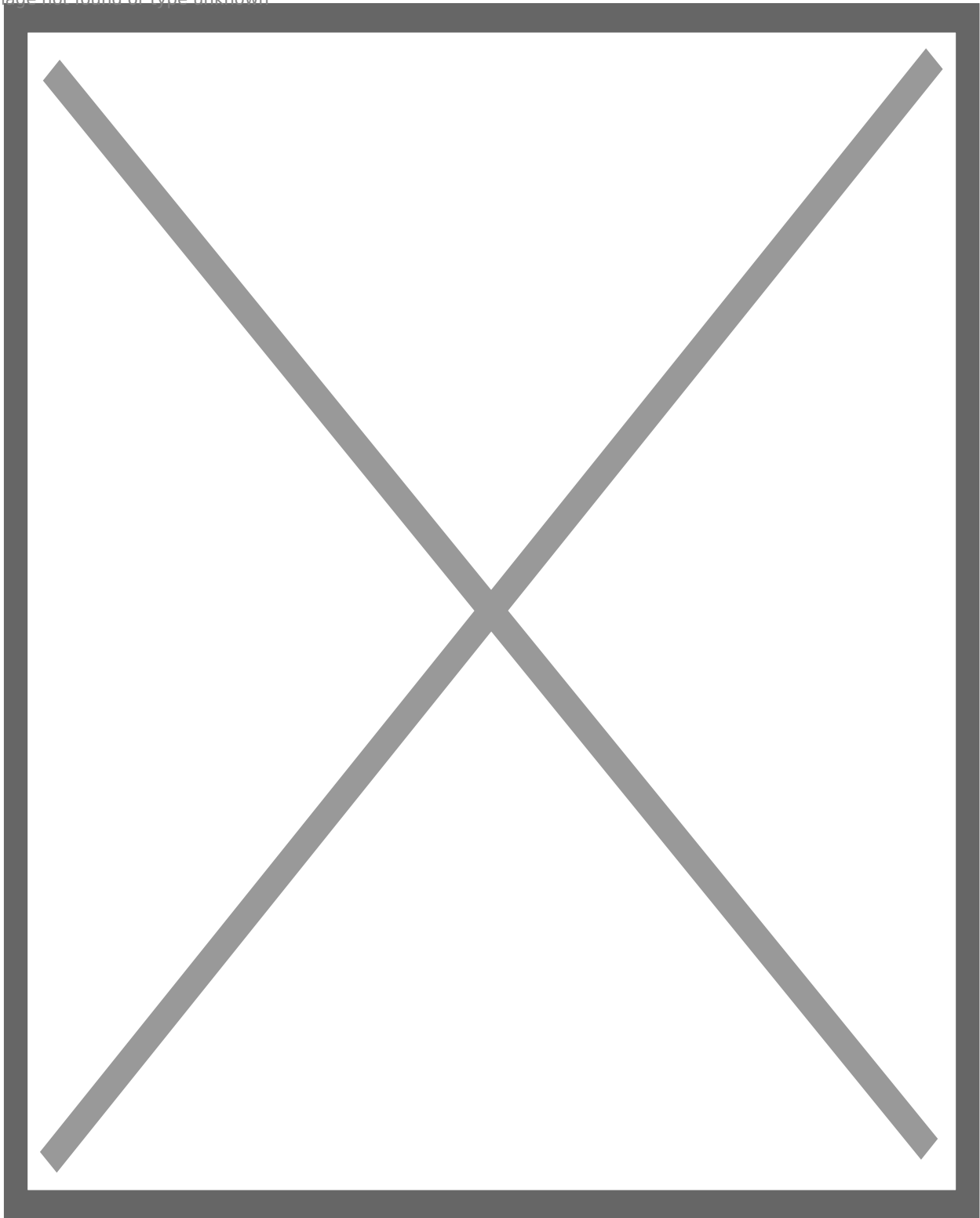
Post by “Kalosyni” of January 16, 2022 at 8:12 PM

Here is a beautiful Leonard Cohan song about life-long marriage, and this would illustrate "secure attachment" style.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=NGorjBVag0I>

Attachment theory is interesting, in that it points to why some marriages last and go more smoothly than others. According to attachment theory, a person's early relationships in life with mother/caregiver can affect their romantic relationships later on. The four attachment styles are: 1) secure 2) anxious-preoccupied 3) dismissive-avoidant 4) fearful-avoidant

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[How Different Attachment Styles Affect Relationships](#)

Knowing your attachment style can help improve your romantic relationship.

www.psychologytoday.com

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

Post by “Scott” of January 19, 2022 at 11:32 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"Epicurean calculus"

OMG that's the first I've heard this term. Perfect! I'm using that instead of hedonic calculus from now on! "Hedonic calculus" is sooo loaded with baggage which is not in line with what we know of Epicurean thinking! It is a term that will just continually cause misunderstanding. Thanks for that one [Cassius](#)!

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 19, 2022 at 11:59 AM

Sharing a common worldview could be an important compatibility factor in maintaining a happy romantic relationship. This might explain why some couples divorce after the children are grown and move out of the house.

Now thinking...if one person holds an "Epicurean" worldview and the other does not, the relationship could still function but might not be as deep or connected. The drives and choices one makes come from one's worldview. Also, both short-term and long-term goals come out of one's worldview. In a long-term relationship the couple needs to jointly create either a shared or an overlapping worldview, with at least one ongoing shared activity.

A couple could define a shared worldview (and could have more than one of the following):

"Let's have an intellectually meaningful life" (studying; learning)

"Let's have a spiritually centered life" (personal-growth; religion)

"Let's have a family centered life" (time with children, families of origin, extended family)

"Let's help the world" (volunteer work; teaching)

"Let's change the world" (politics)

"Let's have a beautiful life" (aesthetic enjoyment; generating and spending wealth)

"Let's have a fun life" --- (doing activities which are enjoyable; socializing; traveling)

I would say that the Epicurean worldview is a mix of "fun and meaningful".

Some of the above ideas in the list are from an online article...I added in quite a bit of my own ideas...and this list might still need more added).

Source: <https://www.marieclaire.com/sex-love/a4175...r-is-worldview/>

The deeper importance of all this is to consider your "worldview" compatibility before you enter a long-term relationship.

If you are already married, you can work toward creating an overlapping worldview with common shared goals and shared activities.

This also means that if you are very enthusiastic about Epicureanism, how is your partner going to respond to that? How might you include your partner? How might you forgive/respect your partner if it seems that there is no way to include them in your enthusiasm for Epicureanism. (tip: make sure you have another area in your life that you are both equally enthusiastic about). This is all common sense, but presenting these ideas just in case, hope they are helpful. 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 25, 2022 at 11:06 AM

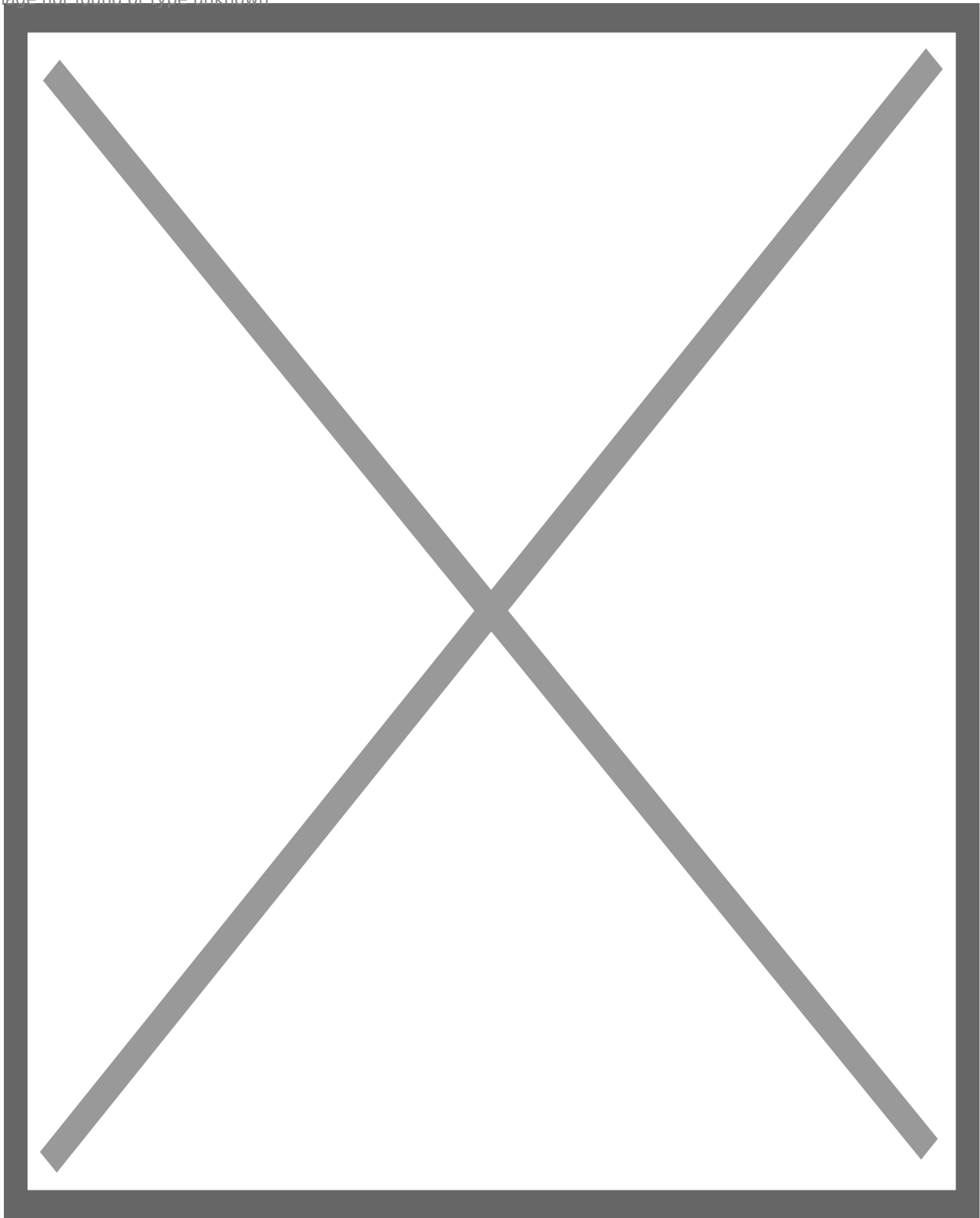
In light of the Epicurean goal of a pleasurable life...here are some further ideas about romantic relationships, since a well functioning intimate relationship leads to more enjoyment in life. Here is an interesting article about the importance of common interests in long-term relationships. And so putting in time toward cultivating fun shared activities would be a good investment toward the well-being of a relationship.

Quote

...couples that have similar interests to a similar degree tend to have healthier relationships. These partners show interest in one another, think alike, share passion, enjoy similar adventures, and in the end, *bond*. These couples fight less because they generally agree on how to invest their energy and finances. Life is better in so many ways for couples who share interests.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/magnet...n-relationships>

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[The Importance of Shared Interests in Relationships](#)

One way to get and remain close to your partner.

www.psychologytoday.com

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 6, 2022 at 12:48 PM

Valentine's Day is coming up soon. The origin may go back as far as the Roman festival of Lupercalia, which was later replaced by the Christian day honoring the martyr Saint Valentine.

Quote

Although there is no evidence linking Saint Valentine's Day to the rites of the ancient Roman or ancient Greek cults, popular modern sources claim links to the Roman Lupercalia celebration observed around February 13–15, a rite connected to fertility. Lupercalia was a festival local to the city of Rome. The more general Festival of Juno Februa, meaning Juno the purifier or the chaste Juno, was celebrated on February 13–14. Pope Gelasius I (492–496) abolished Lupercalia. Juno is the ancient Roman name for goddess Hera, the spouse of ancient Greek father of the gods Zeus. In the ancient Athenian calendar the period between mid-January and mid-February was the month of Gamelion, dedicated to the sacred marriage of the couple.

<https://greekreporter.com/2013/02/13/anc...valentines-day/>

Quote

The Feast of Saint Valentine was established by [Pope Gelasius I](#) in AD 496 to be celebrated on February 14 in honour of Saint Valentine of Rome, who died on that date in AD 269.[\[9\]\[10\]](#) The day became associated with romantic love in the 14th and 15th centuries when notions of [courtly love](#) flourished, apparently by association with the "[lovebirds](#)" of early spring. In 18th-century England, it grew into an occasion in which couples expressed their love for each other by presenting flowers, offering confectionery, and sending greeting cards (known as "valentines"). Valentine's Day symbols that are used today include the heart-shaped outline, doves, and the figure of the winged [Cupid](#). Since the 19th century, handwritten valentines have given way to mass-produced greeting cards.[\[11\]](#) In Italy, [Saint Valentine's Keys](#) are given to lovers "as a romantic symbol and an invitation to unlock the giver's heart"...

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentine%27s_Day

Regarding love and romantic relationships, there is not much to go on within Epicureanism.

In *De rerum Natura* Lucretius (Book 4, 1030) mentions the energies which arise in the body, and then further goes on speak of the dangers of pursuing romance with the wandering Venus' -- the courtesans with whom the men of ancient Greece had relationships.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

[Lucretius, On the Nature of Things, Book 4 \(English Text\)](#)

So for modern Epicureans, we must look instead to modern psychology for help with our understanding of marriage and long-term relationships. There is an understanding that relationships go through stages, and I have seen it listed as anywhere between 4 thru 12 stages. I will post more soon on this tomorrow. I may even cover one stage per day as we approach Valentine's Day.

Post by “Joshua” of February 6, 2022 at 1:20 PM

I am persuaded by observation that St. Paul and the Catholic Church actually make a good point when it comes to marriage and relationships.

Quote

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

I do not, of course, accept his definitions of "light" and "righteousness". And not everyone will be flattered by the image of yoked oxen as a metaphor for marriage.

But there is *something* to the idea that a compatible foundation of values and beliefs about 'the constitution of the world' is important to long-term happiness and cooperation.

I do not say that it *cannot* work; only that it will be very difficult to make it work. And this may partly explain the reluctance of some people to pursue marriage, for who can say what changes may develop in the space of decades?

Post by “Joshua” of February 6, 2022 at 1:30 PM

The sad story of [Lucy Harris](#) in the early history of Mormonism may furnish one example of this. Her husband's unfortunate credulity cost them first the farm and then their marriage.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 6, 2022 at 1:42 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

The sad story of Lucy Harris in the early history of Mormonism

Suddenly I am wondering if Lucretius was mis-translated...and my idea is likely totally unrelated to what you had intended.

I am off now to frolick in the Oregon sunshine, a rare treat. More tomorrow on the "Stages of Romantic Love".

Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2022 at 3:40 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

So for modern Epicureans, we must look instead to modern psychology for help with our understanding of marriage and long-term relationships

I presume that's a reference to courtesans who are not usually available to day. But as for the rest of what Lucretius is saying I think that what he is saying is foundational and takes precedence even before modern psychology, all of which has to be conformed to correct philosophy , rather than the other way around.

That's because In my humble view modern psychology is as frequently or more a mess (with camps saying very opposite things) than modern philosophy. 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 7, 2022 at 11:53 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

That's because In my humble view modern psychology is as frequently or more a mess (with camps saying very opposite things)

Yes, very true, and so it comes down everyone must choose for themselves which makes the most reasonable sense. Lately there is the meme within psychology of "science-based" therapies. But we must remember that science itself never holds a final or absolute answer.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

a reference to courtesans

I was referring to Lucretius Book 4, in which men are wooing courtesans (since they were not prostitutes, but were like a mistress that was supported with gifts and other economic requirements in exchange for exclusive (or mostly exclusive) sexual favors. So this description by Lucretius can appear similar to the very early stage of dating and falling in love, where a man tries to woo a woman with gifts. But Lucretius warns against having passion for the courtesan. Everything he writes is based on the context of the courtesan, and so it is absolutely not applicable to modern life.

[Quote from Joshua](#)

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

I do not, of course, accept his definitions of "light" and "righteousness". And not everyone will be flattered by the image of yoked oxen as a metaphor for marriage.

But there is something to the idea that a compatible foundation of values and beliefs about 'the constitution of the world' is important to long-term happiness and cooperation.

I do not say that it cannot work; only that it will be very difficult to make it work. And this may partly explain the reluctance of some people to pursue marriage, for who can say what changes may develop in the space of decades?

Yes, a compatible foundation of values and beliefs is completely necessary. Also, both people must have a kind, honest, and patient disposition. There are so many lists online about what makes people compatible. Some say that two people shouldn't be too much the same, while others say similarity of common interests will bring more shared activities, and shared activities are what create a lasting bond. It makes sense to me that two people should be very similar.

As for the worldview of Epicureanism, and for myself, I think now that if I should ever remarry that the person MUST also be Epicurean, which means that I may never remarry...but on the plus side, at least I will remain free, and not become a "yoked oxen" (lol 😄).

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 7, 2022 at 12:06 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

As an Epicurean, here is what NOT to do:

Quote

In a little German town called Eutin, people still fall in love the old-fashioned way, through hand-written letters and destiny. Meet the celebrity oak tree that has been bringing together dreamers from around the world long before dating apps were even conceived.

<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/germany...ngles-together/>

This may lead to marriage but may not lead to long-term compatibility...and would say that this would be very Anti-Epicurean, since it relies on "fate"...but if you don't properly do a "hedonic calculus" regarding compatibility, then it will lead to unhappiness later after the romance "wears off".

I have read that one of the most common ways that couples meet is through friends and family, and that would also help screen out incompatible people immediately.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 7, 2022 at 12:25 PM

Valentine's Day is all about celebrating love. Here is an excerpt on the first stage of love, and this is just one approach to the idea of stages within a relationship:

Quote

If there's one thing in life that's anything but simple, it's love. That's why there are so many relationships that end early and so many married couples who wind up divorced. Movies and fairytales make the entire experience look so easy, but it's a lot more complicated. While love is a natural thing to feel, most people don't know that love will eventually move through several stages of love.

It evolves as your relationship and life evolves. If you or your partner bail too early, you will never reach the final stage where many are able to find true contentment and a stronger connection than ever before.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

Love Stage #1 - The Passionate Beginning

The first stage of love, often called the "honeymoon phase," is what most people envision when they think of falling in love. This is the stage where you meet a potential partner and begin to have feelings for one another. Your heart skips a beat when you see them; you have butterflies in your stomach, and they consume your thoughts. More than love, this is infatuation. You experience intense, passionate feelings for the other person.

This is the stage in which you're most likely to disregard or overlook anything negative or concerning about your potential mate. Their weaknesses seem nonexistent. Other people might see them, but you have no idea what they're talking about. You're wearing rose-colored, heart-shaped glasses. Plus, you're high on [hormones like](#) oxytocin, dopamine, serotonin, testosterone, and estrogen.

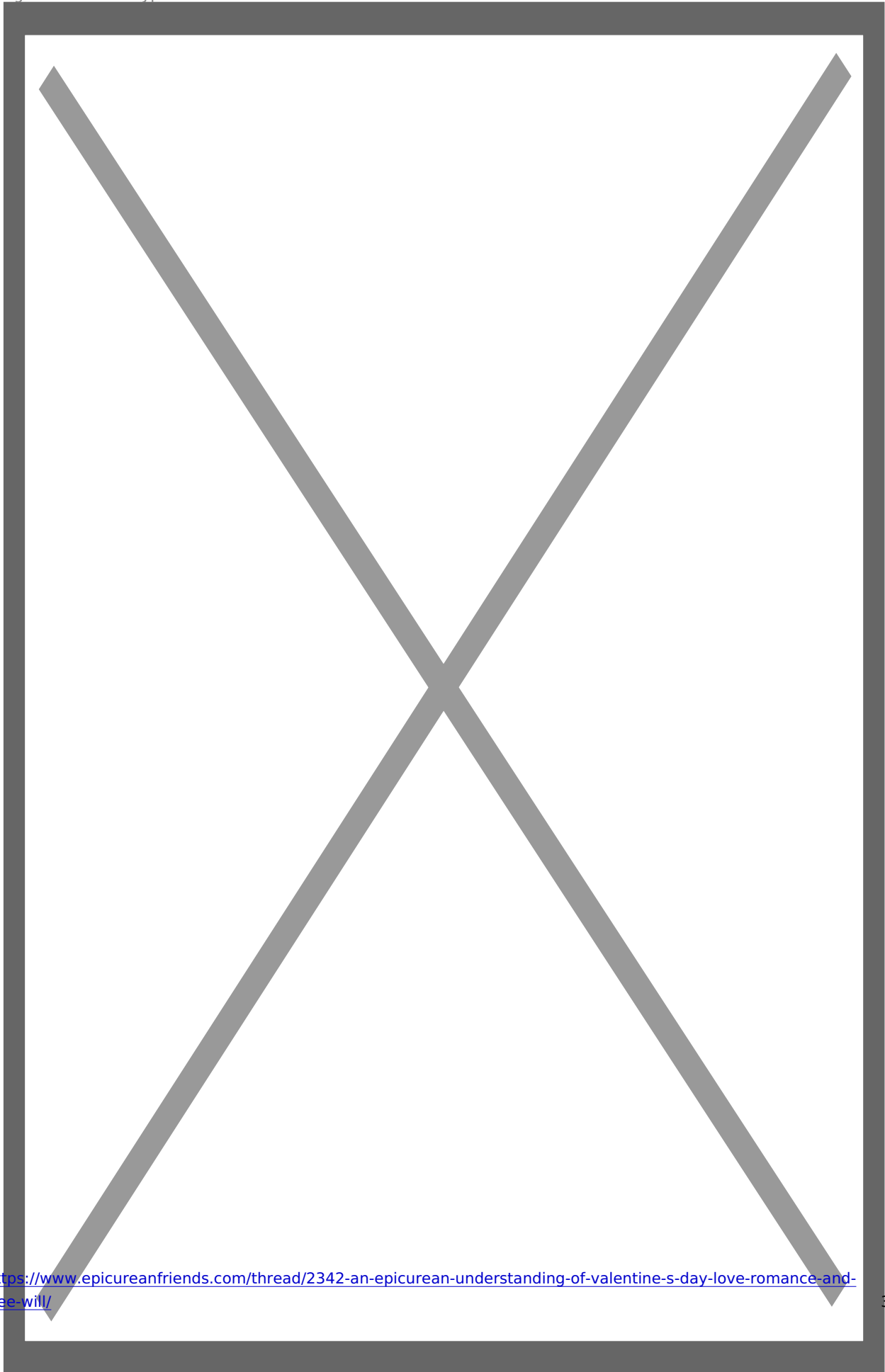
For most people, this is their favorite stage of love because everything just feels good. You can't imagine arguing or things taking a turn for the worse. If only you could stay in this stage forever! However, that is not realistic. For a relationship to last, you have to know your partner intimately, including all of his or her flaws and faults. That begins in the next stage.

<https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/love/ho...stages-of-love/>

Display More

And here is a good one on 7 stages:

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

[What Are The 7 Stages of Marriage and How to Survive Them — Loving at Your Best](#)

All relationships go through stages. Every stage teaches you about the other person, which might reveal a side of them that you didn't know about.

www.lovingatyourbest.com

Post by “Cassius” of February 7, 2022 at 1:04 PM

I await with great anticipation the comments of others here and I particularly want to see comments on this:

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Everything he writes is based on the context of the courtesan, and so it is absolutely not applicable to modern life.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of February 8, 2022 at 7:47 AM

Maybe I'll add a thought to this conversation- I'm far too young to be married and haven't had a romantic relationship before, so I'm having the viewpoint of an "outsider". Even so, I think that this gives me a unique opportunity to see the situation from a different viewpoint than you 😊

At least as far as I can judge, I see the concept of marriage as... strange. I understand that there may be many advantages- I immediately think of security. But it seems to me that a romantic relationship is a big, big liability, because you aren't free. You are constantly responsible for another person, and this person is also responsible for you. There may be rare cases when there are two absolutely compatible persons, who will understand each other without words and who form a whole one- basically the concept of Plato. But, I dare to say, that this is rare, and that most marriages inevitably come into the stage when the two people married realize that they don't want to be around each other anymore. But when these people have a house? Or kids? Then they have to stay together... and thats really toxic.

So my stance would be that romantic relationships can be really fulfilling and life-improving. But by marrying, the person essentially gives up their ataraxia for an unknown future. A bad deal, in my opinion, as long as you aren't 100% certain that the person you're marrying will stay the same kind, nice and great person for the rest of your life. And I think that its obvious that it simply can't be the case: people always change over time. So why bound yourself "until

death tears us apart"? Enjoy life, build relationships, but always know that you'd be able to survive on your own. That's what freedom is, in my opinion 😊

Post by "Cassius" of February 8, 2022 at 9:30 AM

Those are great issues to discuss Smoothiekiwi. One of them is the question of "divorce" vs "til death to us part." I don't know if anyone here would advocate in favor of abolition of divorce, so we're probably talking in the context that "divorce" is at least a partial answer to your concerns.

Then there are the issues of

(1) children, which I think most people (apparently not including Plato!) would agree are best raised in a stable family.

(2) and protection and financial stability of women, who are apt to be put in extremely poor financial positions if the commitment that is made in raising a family or being married in general is not long term.

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

But by marrying, the person essentially gives up their ataraxia for an unknown future.

But that last is the formulation I would most push back against. As in some other current threads where we are discussing pain and pleasure, I don't think that Epicurus was unrealistic about pain: pain is required in order to live to any degree, and more pain is often required for more pleasure. So while "Absence of disturbance" and "absence of pain" are goals in the Epicurean system, they are not in themselves the ultimate goal or the highest goal. PLEASURE trumps both of those, and we can and do accept some degree of both disturbance and pain in order to achieve the pleasures we want in life.

Posing the question in this way really exhibits - in my view - how terrible a mistake it is to postulate ataraxia and aponia as the highest goods rather than pleasure. (And I will add that it makes it worse to leave them untranslated, because that makes it harder for newer people to understand what really is being discussed.) When you make it clear what is involved, it seems to me that it's easy to see that OF COURSE the avoidance of disturbance and the avoidance of pain do not trump all other considerations. Over and over Epicurus makes that clear, and in those situations where it can be argued that he seems to be saying something else, you override that interpretation by looking to the foundations and the full context of the philosophy, and adopt a construction that is consistent with both - not a construction that would blow the philosophy to smithereens if adopted (as some, regretfully, do).

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of February 8, 2022 at 1:02 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Posing the question in this way really exhibits - in my view - how terrible a mistake it is to postulate ataraxia and aponia as the highest goods rather than pleasure

Yes, I absolutely agree! I don't want to say in any way that the highest goal of an Epicurean is the ataraxia and tranquility. And although autarchy is very important, sometimes its necessary to trade it in for greater pleasure. I'm not going to cancel school and head out into the world right now, because I know that if I stick through the lessons for a few more months, I'll be able to have a much better future. In my opinion, thats self-evident, and thus the argument that "no pain is the main goal" is honestly stupid 😊

[Quote from Cassius](#)

(2) and protection and financial stability of women, who are apt to be put in extremely poor financial positions if the commitment that is made in raising a family or being married in general is not long term.

Thats a good point- I see the negative side, where a woman is forced to stay in a toxic relationship although it would be better (albeit financially more difficult) to head out on her own...

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 8, 2022 at 1:08 PM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

I see the concept of marriage as... strange. I understand that there may be many advantages- I immediately think of security.

As far as security, there is also long-term committed co-habitation, as there are some people who do stay together for many years without being legally married (but this may be a low number).

In any long-term relationship there is the main benefit of sexuality -- especially during the ages of 30's and 40's...married people have more sex (unless they are in an unhappy marriage).

Married people also tend to do better financially when both are adequately employed and they can then afford to buy a home.

In marriage there is the benefit of companionship. A married couple might move one or more times during their lifetime, or might lose some of their friends due to changes in employment. The couple stays together no matter if employment requires relocation, and so the long-term companionship gives a continuity. Also during retirement and in the later part of life, the companionship is very important.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 8, 2022 at 1:38 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

As in some other current threads where we are discussing pain and pleasure, I don't think that Epicurus was unrealistic about pain: pain is required in order to live to any degree, and more pain is often required for more pleasure. So while "Absence of disturbance" and "absence of pain" are goals in the Epicurean system, they are not in themselves the ultimate goal or the highest goal. PLEASURE trumps both of those, and we can and do accept some degree of both disturbance and pain in order to achieve the pleasures we want in life.

Posing the question in this way really exhibits - in my view - how terrible a mistake it is to postulate ataraxia and aponia as the highest goods rather than pleasure. (And I will add that it makes it worse to leave them untranslated, because that makes it harder for newer people to understand what really is being discussed.) When you make it clear what is involved, it seems to me that it's easy to see that OF COURSE the avoidance of disturbance and the avoidance of pain do not trump all other considerations. Over and over Epicurus makes that clear, and in those situations where it can be argued that he seems to be saying something else, you override that interpretation by looking to the foundations and the full context of the philosophy, and adopt a construction that is consistent with both

The pain that is taken on should be in service to long-term pleasure...so if marriage over-all turns out to be 50/50, then it is a tough call. Having been married I would say that the pleasure was high in the early years, and much lower in the later years. The reason that I divorced was

because it at times became unbearable with no hope for reconciling the irreconcilable differences.

I begin to think that marriage is going to be difficult unless both people possess certain characteristics. Here is my "recipe" for a happy marriage, both people must have:

- 1) superb negotiation skills
 - 2) high emotional intelligence
 - 3) very grounded in reasoned thinking and general intelligence
 - 4) highly co-operative and generous dispositions
 - 5) a people-centered approach to life (hold people as more important than ideas or objects)
 - 6) a shared worldview and goals in life
-

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of February 9, 2022 at 11:28 AM

[Kalosyni](#) , your first post has a good point, and I'm not even going to argue with that 😊
Probably the truth lies somewhere in between- sometimes marriages can be a toxic relationship, sometimes a great sense of security and connection. The exact result of it depends on the circumstances.

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

5) a people-centered approach to life (hold people as more important than ideas or objects)

In that case, I wouldn't like to be a woman:

[Results showed that men prefer working with things and women prefer working with people](#)

And, to be honest, I think that most of the stuff you've mentioned is a model of a "perfect partner". By no means I want to devalue your points, as I can completely understand them... but how many people fulfill all of these requirements? My guess is, not that many.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 9, 2022 at 12:58 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

I think that most of the stuff you've mentioned is a model of a "perfect partner".

Okay...then not so much as possessing the qualities perfectly, but rather at some level, and also able to improve, otherwise marriage will be a difficult experience and end up in divorce.

Also, I read this somewhere in the past...people who have a drive for extreme novelty...they make bad marriage partners. You'll be able to judge this trait in the way that people enjoy eating because they will be the ones who are continually seeking out new restaurants to try...so eventually they will lose interest in the "comfort sex" of marriage.

The above list I wrote is just some ideas about why it is difficult to be happy in marriage...because there are so many variables. And there could be other variables that I left out.

Statistics show that better educated people tend to be less likely to divorce, and one would hope that they would be happier in their marriages. Perhaps this is because their intelligence and emotional stability leads to a better "hedonic calculus" (or "prudent calculus") during the initial dating process...being better able to vet out their dating choices, before coming to find a life partner.

The quality of one's marriage has such an influence on whether one lives pleasantly and pleasurable...so it is paramount to choose well.

Post by "Cassius" of February 9, 2022 at 1:02 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

You'll be able to judge this trait in the way that people enjoy eating because they will be the ones who are continually seeking out new restaurants to try...so eventually they will lose interest in the "comfort sex" of marriage.

That sounds right to me, and it reminds me of something Thomas Jefferson is quoted to have said too (if I can remember it I will post it!)

Post by "smoothiekiwi" of February 9, 2022 at 3:04 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

[Kalosyni](#) , thats interesting!

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Okay...then not so much as possessing the qualities perfectly, but rather at some level, and also able to improve, otherwise marriage will be a difficult experience and end up in divorce.

I can agree with that- but doesn't every human being possesses these traits at least in some quantity? where would you draw the line of "that's enough"?

I also completely agree that these traits help you to live happily- that's extremely important. But when will you stop seeking and being content with the possible partner you have? Pure hedonistic calculus?

Post by “Cassius” of February 9, 2022 at 6:29 PM

In regard to what Kalosyni's comment on always looking for new restaurants being an indicator of marriage failure (kind of funny even to say that) here is what I remembered from Jefferson ([Letter to Peter Carr - August 10 1787](#)) Not the same thing, but probably related:

Quote

Traveling. This makes men wiser, but less happy. When men of sober age travel, they gather knowledge, which they may apply usefully for their country; but they are subject ever after to recollections mixed with regret; their affections are weakened by being extended over more objects; & they learn new habits which cannot be gratified when they return home. Young men, who travel, are exposed to all these inconveniences in a higher degree, to others still more serious, and do not acquire that wisdom for which a previous foundation is requisite, by repeated and just observations at home. The glare of pomp and pleasure is analogous to the motion of the blood; it absorbs all their affection and attention, they are torn from it as from the only good in this world, and return to their home as to a place of exile & condemnation. Their eyes are forever turned back to the object they have lost, & its recollection poisons the residue of their lives. Their first & most delicate passions are hackneyed on unworthy objects here, & they carry home the dregs, insufficient to make themselves or anybody else happy. Add to this, that a habit of idleness, an inability to apply themselves to business is acquired, & renders them useless to themselves & their country. These observations are founded in experience. There is no place where your pursuit of knowledge will be so

little obstructed by foreign objects, as in your own country, nor any, wherein the virtues of the heart will be less exposed to be weakened. Be good, be learned, & be industrious, & you will not want the aid of traveling, to render you precious to your country, dear to your friends, happy within yourself. I repeat my advice, to take a great deal of exercise, & on foot. Health is the first requisite after morality. Write to me often, & be assured of the interest I take in your success, as well as the warmth of those sentiments of attachment with which I am, dear Peter, your affectionate friend.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 10, 2022 at 12:08 PM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

I can agree with that- but doesn't every human being possess these traits at least in some quantity? where would you draw the line of "that's enough"?

I also completely agree that these traits help you to live happily- that's extremely important. But when will you stop seeking and being content with the possible partner you have? Pure hedonistic calculus?

The question of...how do you know if someone will make a good life partner?

There are certain personality traits that lead to better outcomes in marriage...conscientiousness and agreeableness:

Quote

Conscientiousness and Agreeableness

As might be expected, high levels of [conscientiousness and agreeableness](#) predict relationship satisfaction, in part because these traits signify low impulsivity and high interpersonal trust, respectively.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/insigh...r-romantic-life>

And the personality trait of neuroticism is negatively correlated with marriage satisfaction:

Quote

By a broad (and rare) scholarly consensus, neuroticism is the personality trait [most strongly predictive](#) of a person's romantic destiny. [High neuroticism](#) is uniformly [bad news](#) in this context. For example, in 1987 University of Michigan researchers [Lowell Kelly and James Connelly](#) published a study that followed 300 married couples over 30 years. The neuroticism of one spouse predicted dissatisfaction in [marriage](#) and [divorce](#). Adding insult to injury, research has also shown that high neuroticism predicts [low resilience post-divorce](#).

Neuroticism appears to [interfere with relationship satisfaction](#) in multiple ways. By definition, neurotic individuals tend to be highly reactive to [stress](#) and prone to experiencing negative emotions. These tendencies are likely to radiate onto the partner and create problems over time.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/insigh...r-romantic-life>

Should you stay with your partner or leave them to find someone better?

There is no reason to stay in a bad relationship unless you already have children. Especially if the relationship is toxic, that would be a good reason to end it for the sake of protecting the children...physical or mental abuse, substance abuse or addiction, and anger management issues. And when there are children, then going to a therapist to improve the relationship would be a good idea, and would also help determine if the relationship can be mended or if the couple should separate or divorce.

If there are no children, then it comes down to a "prudent calculus" and also if the couple is willing to put work into [improving the relationship](#).

Post by "Kalosyni" of February 10, 2022 at 12:13 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

In regard to what Kalosyni's comment on always looking for new restaurants being an indicator of marriage failure (kind of funny even to say that)

More specifically the personality trait of extroversion and "adventurism":

Quote

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

high extroversion can undermine relationships because it is associated with *adventurism*. A 2008 study by [David Schmidt](#) involving more than 13,000 participants in 46 countries found high extroversion to be “positively correlated with interest in short-term mating, unrestricted sociosexuality, having engaged in short-term mate poaching attempts, having succumbed to short-term poaching attempts of others, and lacking relationship exclusivity.”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/insigh...r-romantic-life>

Post by “Cassius” of February 10, 2022 at 4:53 PM

I am beginning to focus in on "always wants to go to new restaurants" as really good litmus test of something. Not sure exactly what, but a really good test 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 10, 2022 at 7:32 PM

Perhaps it is a litmus test for extravagant tastes that are never satisfied.

Vatican Sayings:

68. Nothing is enough to one for whom enough is very little.

69. The ingratitude of the soul makes a creature greedy for endless variation in its way of life.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of February 11, 2022 at 4:23 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

There is no reason to stay in a bad relationship unless you already have children

Sorry, but I heavily disagree. A toxic environment is far, far worse for a child than a divorce. I don't know where that concept of "if you have children, the relationship has to be preserved"

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>

comes from. At least as far as I can judge, it's far better if the parents separate, but both of them stay mentally healthy and don't let out their anger or frustration on the child.

Probably that's very naive, and the question of money, custody etc. is still open... but in an ideal world, where you have ataraxia, going different ways will be more beneficial for the child, especially if the two parents divorced in a friendly and nice way, without insults and stuff.

Post by “Cassius” of February 11, 2022 at 5:15 PM

I think that you two are probably not so far from each other. It's probably true that in some significant number of cases an unhappy marriage can be hidden from the children so that they are not as affected as they would be by divorce. I would stress "sometimes" and that we have another situation where it depends on details and "always" isn't going to apply.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 11, 2022 at 5:54 PM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

A toxic environment is far, far worse for a child than a divorce.

Yes I agree. If it sounded as if I thought differently, then it was probably due to my poor writing skills which made it confusing, and apologize for that. Divorce would most likely be best in cases of physical or mental abuse, substance abuse or addiction, and anger management issues. If these aren't present, and one has children, then staying together may be okay.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

It's probably true that in some significant number of cases an unhappy marriage can be hidden from the children so that they are not as affected as they would be by divorce. I would dress "sometimes" and that we have another situation where it depends on details and "always" isn't going to apply.

I have a old out-of-state friend, who a while back, told me that he is staying in a unhappy and sexless marriage because he says he doesn't want another man becoming a step-father to his daughter and raising her. It is his second marriage and he became a father later in life...I also suspect that he may think that it would take too much effort to divorce and try to find a new

partner later in life...as well as deal with the financial hardship that would come with divorce.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of February 12, 2022 at 6:03 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I would dress "sometimes" and that we have another situation where it depends on details and "always" isn't going to apply.

Yes, that's something I can agree to. There may be some cases where staying together is more beneficial, especially if the persons in question still can stay „just friends“. If the love is gone, but the two can still interact with each other like adults, I don't see any problem.

The other thing is when adults become toxic and don't take up their responsibility. And that's infuriating to me- because children don't have anything to say in such relationships, but must endure the toxic environment.

Post by “Cassius” of February 12, 2022 at 6:57 AM

Gosh I apologize for my poor spelling (dress instead of stress). It's easy to lower ones standards when using telephones to type.

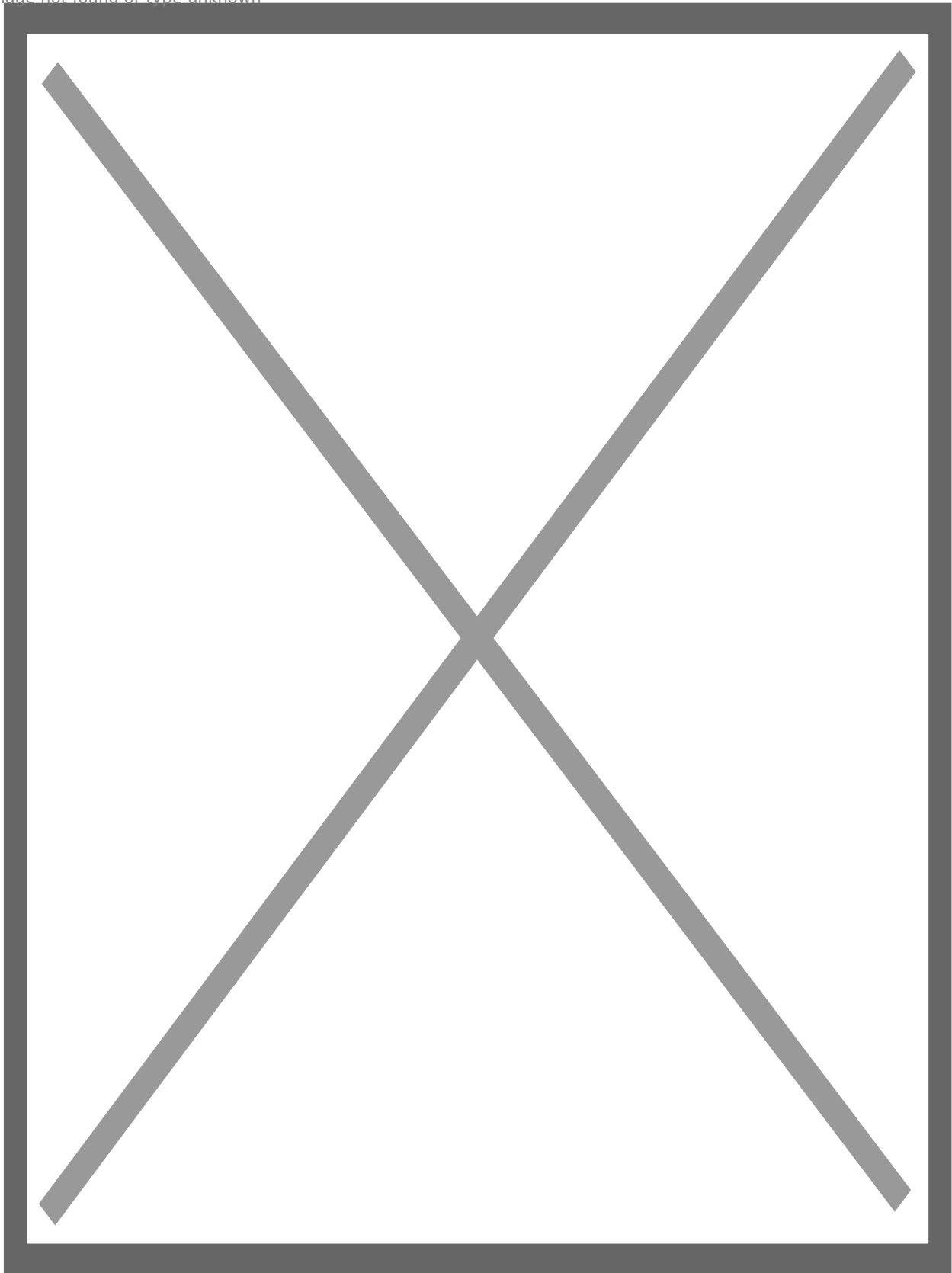
Post by “Kalosyni” of February 14, 2022 at 1:28 PM

Happy Valentine's Day everyone! 

Epicurean wisdom is to enjoy pleasures which do not result in an excess of pain, but to pursue those things which produce more pleasures in the long run. Perhaps then we must use the virtue of love to create pleasure, for it is a pleasure and a joy to love, and to love one's own beloved and to love one's friends.

As an aside...here is a link to "Carte de Tendre"...a 1654 French "map of love", showing the many dangers that can befall the path of romance.

Image not found or type unknown



[Map of Tendre - Wikipedia](#)

en.m.wikipedia.org

A wise person will make good choices and will be able to enjoy love and loving with less pain than an unwise person who rushes in too quickly.

It is important to note that Epicurus wrote a book on "Love" and it is listed in third place in Diogenes Laertius book 10...and also a book on "Touch" (much further down on the list)...we can only guess, since these were lost.

Quote

Such then, so numerous are the works of [Epicurus](#); the chief of which are the following:

- thirty-seven treatises on Natural Philosophy;
- one on Atoms and the Void;
- one on Love;
- an abridgment of the Arguments employed against the Natural Philosophers;
- one against the Doctrines of the [Megarians](#);
- Problems;
- Fundamental Propositions;
- a treatise on Choice and Avoidance;
- another on the Chief Good;
- another on the Criterion, called also the [Canon](#);
- [Chaeredemus](#), a treatise on the Gods;
- one on Piety;
- [28] [G Hegesianax](#)
- four essays on Lives;
- one on Just Dealing;
- [Neocles](#);
- one essay addressed to [Themista](#);
- the Banquet;
- [Eurylochus](#);
- one essay addressed to [Metrodorus](#);
- one on Seeing;
- one on the Angle in an Atom;
- one on Touch;
- one on Fate;
- Opinions on the Passions;
- one treatise addressed to [Timocrates](#);
- Prognostics;
- Exhortations;
- a treatise on Images;

- one on Perceptions;
- [Aristobulus](#);
- an essay on Music;
- one on Justice and the other Virtues;
- one on Gifts and Gratitude;
- *Polymedes*;
- *Timocrates*, a treatise in three books;
- *Metrodorus*, in five books;
- [Antidorus](#), in two books;
- Opinions about Diseases, addressed to [Mithras](#);
- *Callistolas*;
- an essay on Kingly Power;
- *Anaximenes*;
- Letters.

Since pleasure is our guide, we can know the right path to take by paying attention.

May you love with pleasure, joy, and prudence!

Post by “Cassius” of February 14, 2022 at 1:33 PM

Thank you for this post and all you have done to start this thread on Valentine's Day!

Post by “Scott” of February 14, 2022 at 2:43 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Happy Valentine's Day everyone!

Happy Valentine's Day to all! May you be blessed with love relationships that make your life deeper and more satisfying.

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Since pleasure is our guide, we can know the right path to take by paying attention.

Well, perhaps, but its a tough thing to "know"! I think humans have a difficult time of romance and long term [committed/contractual] relationships. Many many failures in this area! Playing a game of cards or tennis may be rewarding and/or frustrating, but it is soon over and a new one can be started at any time! With romance and finding "mates" and marriage, one must make longer term choices - eventually most people make a choice to intend to stick someone for the rest of their lives. Now no matter how much I love Beethoven's 7th Symphony, I would probably tire of it if I listened to it several times every single day for the rest of my life. That's a stretch of an analogy, but not without some merit. Humans are generally inclined to monogamy, but it is certainly not always a piece of cake. Are there any Epicurean quotes on long term relationship pleasure/happiness?

Post by “Root304” of March 25, 2023 at 5:47 PM

I realize it's well past Valentine's Day, but I didn't really celebrate it this year as I did something alternative to that instead.

This year for my partner's birthday in January, I just decided to dedicate the whole first half of the month just to her on a whim and do something spontaneous for her every day for the first 19 days leading up to her birthday. I did everything I had ever thought about but lacked the time, nerves, or gumption to just do it. I wrote love letters, poems, gave gifts, set up elaborate dates, scrambling to come up with something everyday was a challenge but was a wonderful exercise. It was a fantastic start of the year to clear out all those thoughts and intentions from the previous 2 decades, and it was a good show for kids who now like to "declare" certain days for a member of the family or a friend, or some whimsical holiday.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 13, 2025 at 8:28 AM

This is a good article, just in time for Valentine's Day:

<https://www.npr.org/2025/02/11/nx-s1-5288794/9-pieces-of-advice-to-help-you-navigate-the-ups-and-downs-of-romance>

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2342-an-epicurean-understanding-of-valentine-s-day-love-romance-and-free-will/>