

# A Post At Facebook Relevant to Activism And Living As An Epicurean

Post by “Cassius” of May 1, 2022 at 9:29 AM

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Eoghan Gardner

In Epicureanism we are giving a lot of realities and principles. Such as pleasure is the goal of life, pleasure and pain are guides to achieve this goal etc...

I think what's lacking (surely due to most of epicurus writings being so far lost) is the prescriptive nature of what to actually do. There is a sense in which Epicurus seems the type of man not to prescribe many exercises as opposed to Stoicism which is almost all prescription.

Anyway my point is from what we know of the man and his garden what do you think epicurus would prescribe as exercises?

I see many think Buddhists meditation but I don't see why epicurus would do something like that.

Maybe a gratitude journal? But keeping in mind the point of it is not to be grateful but for the pleasure gratitude brings.

[Si Haves](#) Personally I imagine Epicurus practicing gratitude, perhaps a contemplative practice of some sort maybe sitting in silence sometimes and just being in the moment. I'd to imagine him dancing happily and joyfully in the garden.

[Antonio Montero](#) Moderator

I think that the exercise is to be conscious of ourselves, of our own nature, by making the distinction between the different kind of pleasures it brings an aware of ourself that bring that peace which is ataraxia. By observing nature and losing fear of the gods an death we keep ourselves in the present, not thinking about the suffering of death or the punishment of the gods. And by keeping and nourishing friendship and companion ship, knowing that like us, they want to avoid suffering and pain we can create a healthy society. That's my view and how I try to exercise the epicurean philosophy. Taking care of the garden of our life and our friends.

[Nic Reagan](#) He may have, but it was lost to history. Certainly, the early Epicureans celebrated Eikas on the 20th. So, occasional celebrations/feasts are called for as a practice. I would also classify 'withdrawing from public life' and avoiding the seeking of wealth, fame, and power as a

specific 'practice by not-doing'. He also encouraged contemplation of nature, atoms and Void, and their implications for non-fear and non-pain. These are a good starting point. As Epicureans, however, I feel we're free to create our OWN practices within the 'spirit' of Epicureanism, to suit our needs.

[David O'Connell](#) I sincerely think we should discuss forming groups irl to build some sense of Epicurean community. Perhaps that's too long term.

[Sherrillynn Barnes](#)[David O'Connell](#) great idea.

[Richard Owen](#) I genuinely believe that Epicurus would be a big proponent of boardgame nights, intellectual stimulation and good company!

[Panos Alexiou](#) A philosophy for community not individual supermen made out of stone. Meet friends, have good conversation, live life in moderation etc

[Garrett Wise](#) My hunch is that this is because pleasure and pain are subjective to the individual. The things I need to do so that I minimize my pains are much different than the things that my wife must do, since she has medical issues that I don't.

Similarly, although Epicurus described the three different types of desires, each of us has to go through our own unique process of limiting our desires to those Natural and Necessary ones.

[Matt Jax](#) I imagine his prescription was basically to pursue pleasure...to be with friends, to pursue the natural desires of the body with prudence.

[Tristan Mello](#) You know I think we should practice in the way that Epicurus would want. Celebrate friendship. Write a poem for a friend. Tell them you love them and mean it. Practice friendship. You learn from just having a friend. You learn from being a friend... how to be a friend. Like helping our friends. How your friends treat you.

Eoghan - I think a big issue modern people have (and perhaps even the ancient greeks) is that we have been told these truths by Epicurus and his successors but we are so beat down by rules and regulations that we still are looking for a how to guide.

It's kind of like a car that is broke down, a mechanic comes (the teachings of epicurus) and fixes it but sometimes the car needs a push start before it actually can move.

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## **Post by “Kalosyni” of May 1, 2022 at 12:20 PM**

This is great to see what is happening over on Facebook!

This discussion points to the many helpful aspects of Epicureanism and practical application.

This entry was a one was good:

"A philosophy for community not individual supermen made out of stone. Meet friends, have good conversation..."

And this one:

"I sincerely think we should discuss forming groups irl to build some sense of Epicurean community."

As we here are planning for a new Wednesday night Zoom format -- I'd like to see that start up at the very latest on May 11th. We need to seize the day on it -- not worry so much about having it "perfectly" planned or "perfectly" named.

"Wednesday Night Epicurean Zoom Community" will hopefully be starting up soon!

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## **Post by “Cassius” of May 2, 2022 at 7:37 AM**

There are several good additional posts in this thread, but i have time at the moment to paste only this one by Nate followed by one by me:

Nate:

Philodemus offers a prescription and names it as such (pharmakos):

First up, don't fear God or divine punishment. Don't think that the Natural World responds to your intentions like a Universal Mind that is aware of your personal feelings and disposes you accordingly. Life is about learning, so if you fear being punished from masturbating, read about anatomy to dispel that fear. If you fear that life does not make sense, and only the universe acting against you can explain your circumstances, spend time re-considering how such socio-economic circumstances come to play.

Second, don't fear Death, Hell, or an afterlife. Your actions are not being tallied like a morality points in Knights of the Old Republic. Life does not reward you for playing its game after you turn off the game. Don't get distracted by empty speculation: focus on the cause-and-effect of the present. Knowing that you will be saved in an afterlife through faith can lead one to commit many self-destructive and imprudent behaviors. The opposite leads people to despair that they are cursed.

Third, remember that you can live an amazing life living with cheap food and good friendships. You are not being kept from happiness because you lack fame and wealth (just look at Will Smith and Johnny Depp). The best things in life are free, and it is easier to get them than it is a new car. A bag of rice is only a few dollars and will feed you for a week. Your stomach does not distinguish the economic value of an apple, only its digestibility. A happy stomach and a happy friend makes a happy person.

Fourth, if you are in an absolute worst-case-scenario, and the previous three points are doing nothing to ease you from either chronic pain or unmanageable anxiety, just know that the pain cannot last, and you have done a tremendous job by tolerating it, and it is almost done. If you have a psychiatric episode, know that it is closer to being done than it was a few minutes ago. If you have suffered a mortal wound, know that keeping things in perspective will make the end of life more pleasant.

Vipassana, formless meditation, the Eightfold path, raja yoga, hatha yoga, confessionals with priests, ritualistic prayer designed to elicit a deity's favor, fasting, hypnosis, cognitive-behavioral therapy, counseling, pharmaceuticals, and dietary restrictions will not work for everyone. Each has differing levels of efficacy depending on the patient. However, rejecting fear of God, fear of damnation, rejecting celebrity-worship, and keeping optimistic in the face of pain are universally healthy.

Aside from Philodemus' Tetrpharmakos, we are advised to repeat the practice of frankly speaking in a non-judgmental setting (parrhesia), which provides history with one of the first forms of psychological therapy, designed to allow one to acknowledge one's own faults and find opportunities for personal growth. It also serves to foster social bonding and encourage trust relationships between good friends, so people do not feel isolated and resigned to insurmountable obstacles.

And, of course, Epicurus directly prescribes for us to study his philosophy, for it is never too soon, nor too late to secure the health of one's soul. Reading his Epistles, the Vatican Sayings, the Wise Man Sayings, the book of fragments, the Doxai, the poetic translation of On Nature as Lucretius' De Rerum Natura, as well as supplemental literature to understand the historical context (De Witt, Long & Sedley, O'Keefe, Wilson, etc.) are all recommended practices for a person to cure their anxiety.

Cassius:

Epicurus himself made a number of references in his letters to his own pursuit of the study of nature, and of philosophy, as his method of pursuing happiness. I think that gets overlooked as too general and imprecise to be of much help, but I think there is more to it if you consider some of his other viewpoints: In chapter Four of Lucretius, there is a long discussion of the nature and function of "images," and how the mind processes the things that are around us and

incorporates them into our lives - even to the extent of dreaming about them at night. And as referenced in the opening of Book Six, the way to approach serenely even issues like "the gods" is to have appropriate views about them.

This sounds a lot to me like a form of conditioning your mind and your attitudes by pursuing those activities and studies that lead to please, and that lead to understanding that help you to deal with whatever pains you choose to accept or cannot avoid.

Several people have mentioned above that as individuals we find different things pleasurable, which leads to the view too that it's up to us to understand ourselves and our circumstances and to prudently organize our lives to produced the happiest result.

There's nothing magic in all this, nor should we expect there to be in a universe that is totally natural and without supernatural creation or control.

And to me that leads to one of the most key conclusions of all - that what Epicurus was mainly concerned about was orienting us to the way the world really works, and that there are no supernatural or absolute rules we are required to follow, so that it's up to us to "make hay while the sun shines."

There was a line in Chapter Fourteen of A Few Days in Athens that Frances Wright gives to Epicurus, which he says to a young student who has become attracted to the "vibe" of happiness that Epicurus had established in his Garden, but who had yet to crack a book as to the deeper and more controversial aspects of the philosophy - the student did not know that Epicurus taught that there is no supernatural god, no afterlife, no fate). Wright has Epicurus say to that student:

"I am sorry that you presumed so much, where you knew so little."

Rather than just presume that Epicurus was a direct competitor to the Stoics, and that he had the same presumptions and was after the same goals, we need to first dig into the details of what Epicurus was really teaching so we can see the full implications of the Epicurean worldview. After we see that it seems to me that the questions about "techniques" to live better become much easier to answer.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of May 2, 2022 at 8:17 AM**

This is good stuff! And I can imagine it all being assembled into a short Epicurean reader -- titled as "Epicurean Pharmakos" (will put this on my [to-do list](#)).

## Post by “Don” of May 2, 2022 at 10:59 AM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

This is good stuff! And I can imagine it all being assembled into a short Epicurean reader -- titled as "Epicurean Pharmakos" (will put this on my [to-do list](#)).

To alleviate anyone's confusion over what a "pharmakos" is, maybe even title it "Epicurean Medicine" or something like that.

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

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## Post by “Pacatus” of May 2, 2022 at 1:48 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

I'd to imagine him dancing happily and joyfully in the garden.

I think sometimes we might get caught up in the notion of philosophy involving only mental exercise: study and discussion, thoughts on how to apply a hedonic calculus (or a "virtue calculus" for the Stoics), mind-focused meditation practices (and practices to "condition the mind," as Nate says), etc. The physical comes up more in terms of food and drink, sometimes sex, maybe taking a walk in nature.

But physical exercise can be free (unconditioned) in practice -- and as a practice. Socrates thought that spontaneous dance was the best exercise. As a youth, I did wild, free-form dancing after discovering Zorba the Greek. Later, in middle age, I practiced Tai Chi (very form oriented as a moving meditation). Then I discovered Tandava Yoga, which is like s free-form Qigong (no postures/asanas or prescribed movements) -- and which can be done in a very light way, like Tai Chi -- in which you breathe and allow your body to move as it wishes (that, in itself, is a kind of discipline). I find that I enjoy that very much (as well as, still, the occasional spontaneous dancing).

As Alan Watts once said: "The point is sometimes to go out of your mind -- so you can come to your senses" (rough quote from memory). I have also discovered Laughter Yoga (without the need for jokes, or funny thoughts or gestures).

My problem is a tendency to get lost in my head. Pleasurable, non-directed physical practices are helpful -- once I remember to engage them. 😞