

Any Application of Epicurean Theology to the Christian God(s)

Post by “Root304” of May 28, 2022 at 11:51 AM

I've been mulling over questions around how to approach Christianity with my children and wanting to lighten my own ill-feelings about the religion, and I am wondering if there is any sort of Essays on an Epicurean re-envisioning of the Christian God(s) in the same way Epicurus did to the Greek Gods (tranquil, unconcerned and beings to model in these respects). Thanks for any replies!

Post by “Cassius” of May 28, 2022 at 12:17 PM

Root304 that is a tough one because there's an ultimate level of total incompatibility. However I suspect that one book you might be interested in would be DeWitt's "St Paul and Epicurus" which you can read in full at this location:

[Epicurus.info : E-Texts : Title](#)

Post by “Don” of May 28, 2022 at 12:49 PM

@Root304 , *that* would be an interesting exercise. The Greek gods were just as supernatural as the Christian god and theology is, and as embedded in the modern culture. The omnipresent cultural milieu in the US and other nations is Christianity.

"lighten my own ill-feelings" Good luck with that... And I'm not trying to be sarcastic or tongue in cheek. Honestly, that's not necessarily easy (speaking from personal experience).

But an Epicurean reimagining or mental approach to the cultural gods could be an interesting discussion 🤔

Post by “Joshua” of May 28, 2022 at 1:08 PM

Gassendi supposedly produced a critical apparatus of Book X of Diogenes Laertius, with a view toward finding some level of compatibility with Christianity.

I would probably start there, although I cannot say what you will find--I haven't read his books.

Post by “Cassius” of May 28, 2022 at 1:21 PM

Yes that's a good thought as to Gassendi, though I don't recommend the approach of looking for commonalities either.

There is an english version of Gassendi available. We worked on a digital transcription but didn't get it in very good final form.

Check this location:

[Gassendi's Epicurus - NewEpicurean](#)

Post by “Joshua” of May 28, 2022 at 1:45 PM

I think the fundamental problem is going to be this; while Christian Humanists have been quite happy to import Epicurean Ethics, they haven't been very interested in adopting his view of the gods. Epicureans and their fellow travelers, by contrast, have had little interest in the Christian God, and even less interest in Christian morality.

So you're looking for someone with one foot squarely planted in both worlds. The closest you're going to get to that (and it's far from a good fit) is probably the expelled and denounced Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza. He really was prepared to adopt materialism, at great personal risk, and to reject the supernatural entirely. His God is completely natural--nothing less than the sum of Nature and all her laws.

So I will amend my previous suggestion, and say: I'd start with Spinoza.

You may find this book useful; with the caveat, again, that I have not read it!

Spinoza, the Epicurean: Authority and Utility in Materialism

by Dimitris Vardoulakis

Post by “Cassius” of May 28, 2022 at 3:23 PM

Gosh Joshua's post reminded me of something I can't believe I forgot.

Root304, you may also be interested in Thomas Cooper:

Thread

[Thomas Cooper MD](#)

[Admin Note: I am going to hijack Godfrey's post (which was originally [here](#)) and start a new thread from it on the topic of Thomas Cooper MD, materialist and friend of Thomas Jefferson]:

I would very much like to move Thomas Cooper into the "avowed Epicurean" category, but unfortunately I have not been able to find any references to Epicurus or Lucretius in Cooper's surviving writing which would allow me to do that. Hopefully at some point in the future someone can help me marshal the evidence...



Godfrey

April 4, 2021 at 6:53 PM

So far as i can find Cooper never wrote about Epicurus, but his writings include "[The Scripture Doctrine of Materialism](#)" which argues that "materialism" is the true doctrine of the old and new testaments, and gives lots of cites from the Bible in support of the point!

He also wrote: [A View of the Metaphysical and Physiological Arguments In Favor of Materialism](#) which makes the same arguments but not from a scriptural point of view.

I feel sure that Cooper was a closeted friend of Epicurus, but he held a very public teaching position at the top of a very public university in a very Christian state (South Carolina) so I feel sure his absence of mentioning Epicurus was self-censorship to try to survive in his teaching position. But regardless of that his arguments are very Epicurean-compatible IMHO.

Post by “Root304” of May 28, 2022 at 9:58 PM

So many great suggestions! Thanks everyone!

[Joshua](#) Spinoza keeps coming up every time I get into philosophical conversations with people and I bring up my affections for Epicurus. I definitely need to read him, after I've knocked out my Epicurean reading list.

[Cassius](#) Thanks so much for these suggestions! Sounds right up my alley with this question.

[Don](#) Yes! It's a practical, Epicurean approach to the Christian cultural Gods that I am wanting to develop. I have a lot of mixed and troubled feelings about the atheist sub-culture and the sort of bitterness and righteousness I feel when engaging with that line of thought. That is matched only by the uneasiness and queasiness I feel when engaging with Christianity. A lot of displeasure all around. It seems prudent to me to avoid the psychological, and perhaps social, effects of transgression of the psycho-social phenomena of gods, and I think changing my perceptions and emotions I have about these concepts (gods) and the thought is that it will affect me positively in an unconscious sort of way. I'm probably wrong, but I sort of see this as one part of the move Epicurus was making in viewing the Gods in a state of ataraxia. Putting out the fury of an angry god in the students/patients mind.

Post by "SimonC" of June 3, 2022 at 10:11 AM

Also is there a strong need to "approach christianity" at all, if you feel such uneasiness?

I'm telling my children that we there is nothing supernatural and no life after death. I am also telling them about Christian, Buddhist, Hindu beliefs, but in third person. "There are some people who believe X, y, z".

Post by "Cassius" of June 3, 2022 at 10:27 AM

[Quote from SimonC](#)

Also is there a strong need to "approach christianity" at all, if you feel such uneasiness?

Probably depends strongly on cultural context and circumstances - it is amazing how they differ even within the USA.

Post by “Root304” of June 3, 2022 at 12:19 PM

I guess I currently have lapses in confidence in my own ability to help my kids navigate the philosophical/religious/political/spiritual/social, terrain in an artful way. I feel like I have a decent grasp of the pitfalls and advantages to the various paths out there to be a decent guide, an advantage I have from trying and learning a lot of different things, but clearly formulating the goals and curating the experiences brings in a feeling of anxiety as taking the first steps means committing. Haha, I feel like all my philosophizing over the past 6 years since I have been a dad, has begun with philosophizing about parenting and reflecting on my own childhood. So forgive me for always mentioning that I am thinking about my kids in every post. 🤔

Post by “Don” of June 3, 2022 at 2:08 PM

[Quote from Root304](#)

forgive me for always mentioning that I am thinking about my kids in every post.

Nothing to forgive there 😊

Post by “Don” of June 3, 2022 at 9:09 PM

@Root304 , if you're interested in exploring "spiritual" outlets for your kids: Do you have any Unitarian Universalist churches in your area. We attended one when our daughter was young. My only misgiving(?) was that they were almost too welcoming. Anything goes. That was during my Buddhist period, too. So, they'd be more than open to an Epicurean. But it gave structure for our daughter and she had fun.

Post by “Root304” of June 4, 2022 at 10:22 AM

[Don](#) Yeah, I've been exploring online UU spaces over the pandemic when I started getting back into reading philosophy and religious material again. That renewed search is what led me to Epicurus! I've been flirting with joining the local UU congregation since they've opened up again as a sort of commitment to developing Epicurean practice and other more Naturalist spirituality, and just attempting to be more socially presentable haha. Anyway, maybe I'll drop in tomorrow.

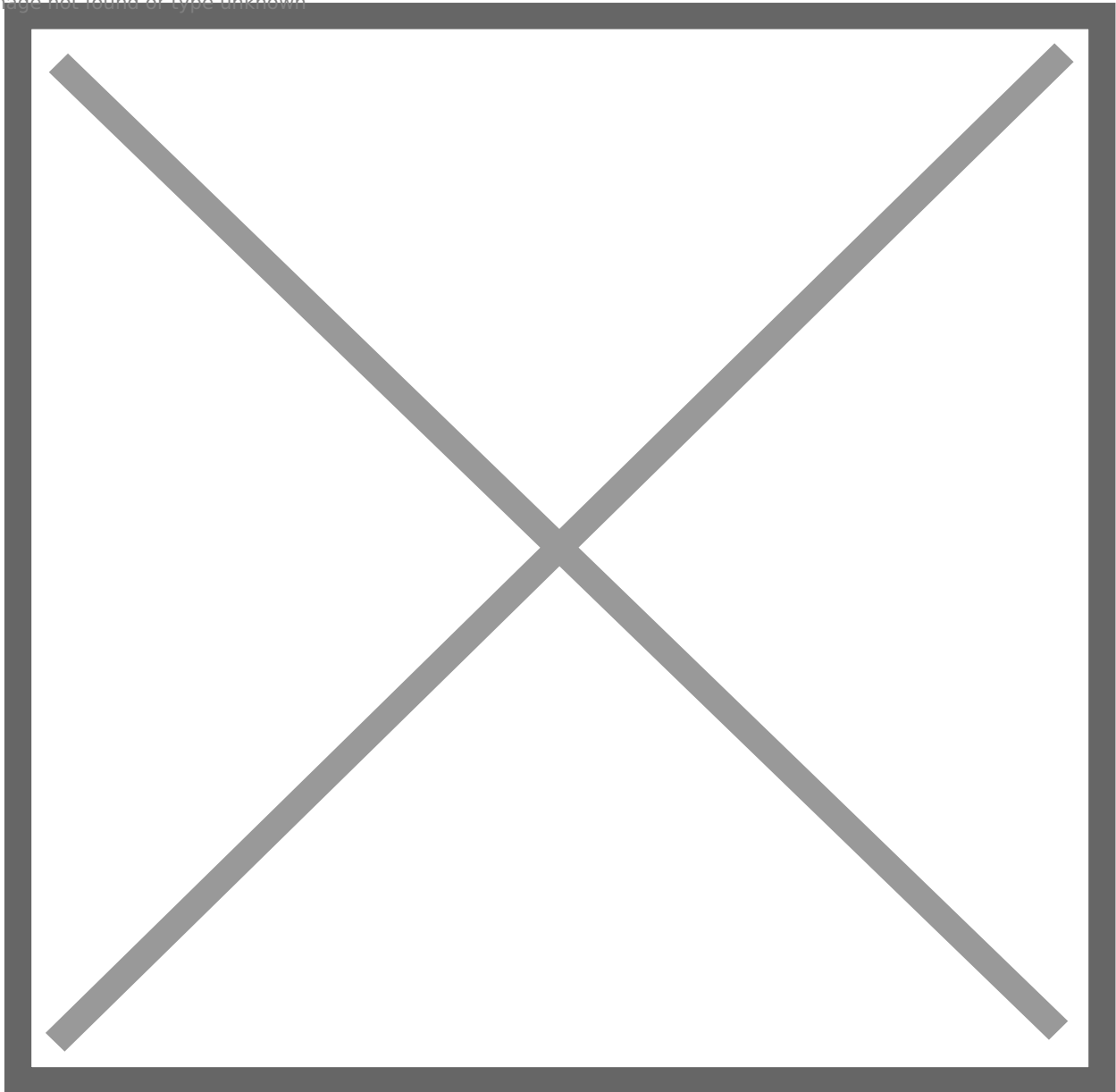
Post by “Don” of June 4, 2022 at 10:43 AM

[Quote from Root304](#)

Anyway, maybe I'll drop in tomorrow.

If you do, keep us posted on your experience. I for one am curious. I've seen some mention of UUs having Epicurean dinners for philosophical conversation and eating. Ex.

Image not found or type unknown



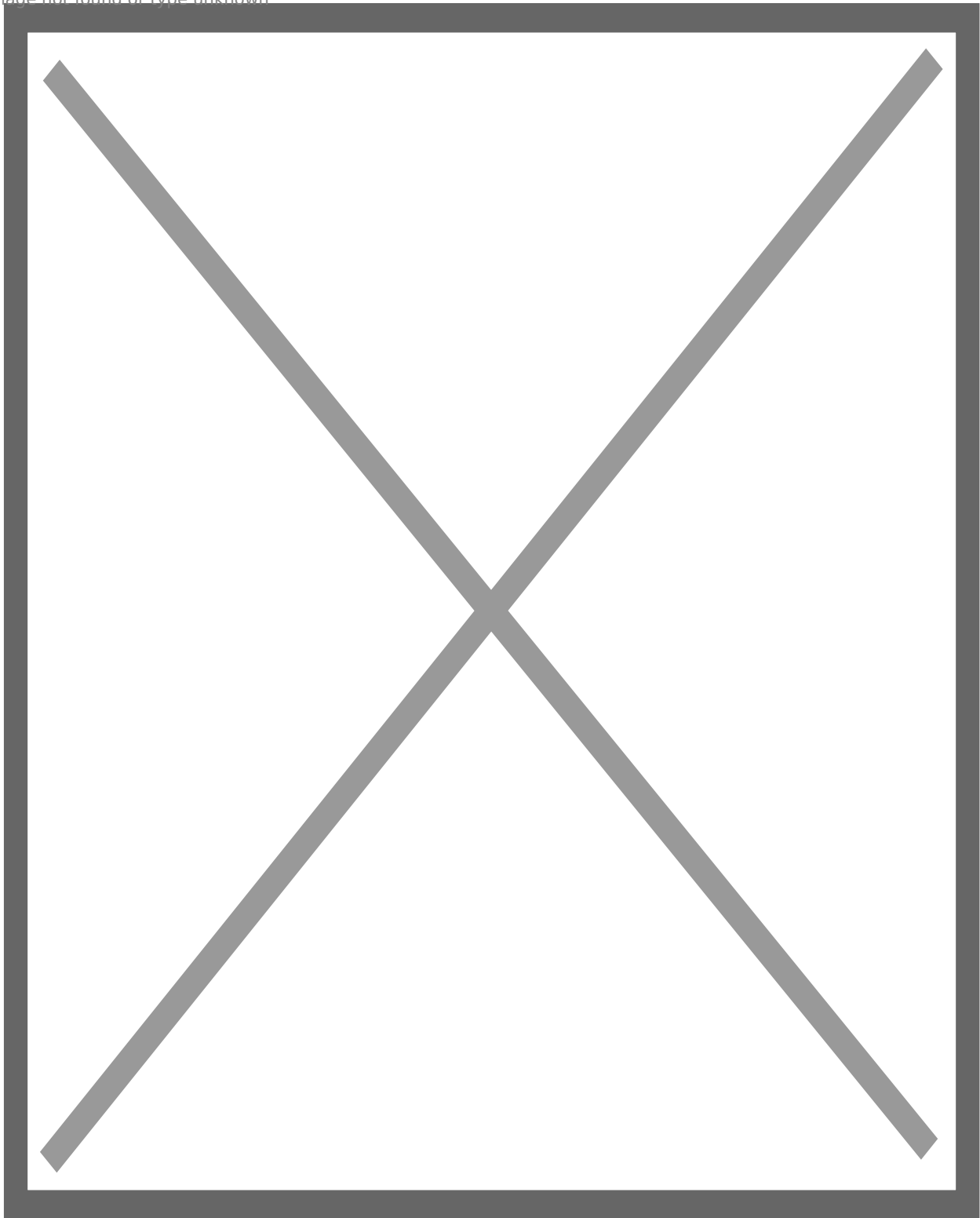
[A second "Epicurean Gathering" and a little bit of it's history](#)

Update 26 June 2014. Please click on this link to go to a page where you will find the most recent revision of the Epicurean Liturgy and a...

andrewjbrown.blogspot.com

[The Swerve: How the World Became Modern | Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton](#)

Image not found or type unknown



[Epicurus Archives - Cambridge Unitarian Church](#)

A Non-Prophet Organisation

www.cambridgeunitarian.org

Post by “Root304” of June 4, 2022 at 11:10 AM

Wow! That's really inspiring! Eventually observing Eikas with the UU sounds fun.

Post by “Don” of June 4, 2022 at 1:03 PM

I must say I kind of liked the "Epicurean liturgy" they link to in the first site.

Post by “Don” of June 4, 2022 at 6:58 PM

I would be very curious if anyone else has had any experience with Unitarian Universalist congregations and Epicureanism. I haven't personally, just using those links as background.

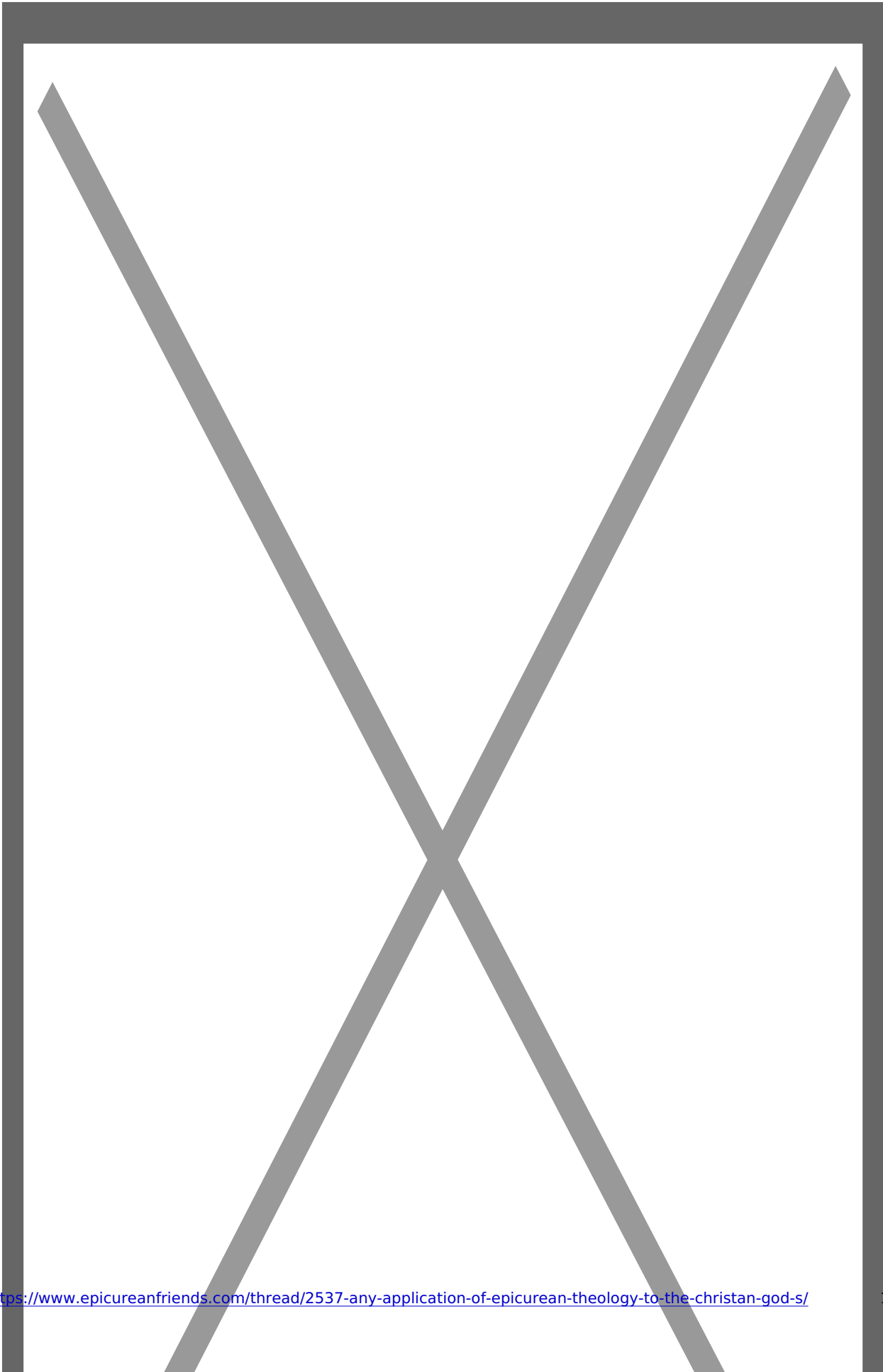
Post by “Don” of June 5, 2022 at 1:41 PM

[Kalosyni](#) , in another thread in the Gallery, made the important point that it depends very much on the individual UU congregation and pastor as to whether they would be open to exploring Epicureanism within their organization. Fully agree! My intent for bringing them up was that they were the only organization that came to mind that would seem to be receptive - if the interest is in exploring the "spiritual" aspects (for lack of a better term than "piety") of Epicurus's philosophy if we don't want to start from scratch.

Post by “Cassius” of June 5, 2022 at 4:13 PM

Just in case it is not clear the conversation that Don mentions in the gallery is here:

Image not found or type unknown



[Epicurean Communities of the Ancient World - Epicureanfriends.com](https://www.epicureanfriends.com)

School at LAMPSACUS (modern Northwestern Turkey) Founded by Epicurus
The GARDEN (Ο ΚΗΠΟΣ) of ATHENS (Central Greece) Founded by Epicurus
Community in CORINTH...
www.epicureanfriends.com

Post by “beasain” of June 10, 2022 at 8:45 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

you might be interested in would be DeWitt's "St Paul and Epicurus"

Carlos García Gual, a prominent translator of ancient Greek to Spanish and professor in ancient philosophy in Spain, signals in his book "Epicuro" (2021, ALIANZA), p. 110, that Epicurus uses the Greek term "sarx" (flesh) instead of the usual "soma" (body), which we encounter also in Saint Paul.

I understand that Christian Writers scanned the whole Ancient Greek Philosophy for useful concepts and terms. We see this also in modern religious expression, e.g. on a technological level, like the use of Power Point, Pay Pal for donations, sophisticated webpages with flashy design. You have to adapt to your markets...

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of June 16, 2022 at 9:26 AM

Hey [beasain](#) I failed to see the connection to technology, but would love to, can you please elaborate?

@Root304 i feel very much identified with your journey, being a dad myself, and for a period of time similar to what you've said; also, was very involved in Christianity, being lightly brought up in it by family, in Catholicism actually, and having gone to school pre university to only Catholic schools.

I had been on the fence for a while but Epicurean Philosophy has helped me to completely ditch it, for myself, but I do struggle with the thoughts of my children missing some of the good things that were thrown away "like the child with the bathwater", but time and again I fail to be able to pin point what these are.

I do find that my older child is benefitting from me trying to help him understand the world rather than thinking magically, but also I worry it will make him an odd child in a very religious society like the one my family lives in. He's definitely not going to catholic school, and I found a school that is more in line with humanism values, so there's hope there.

I have hopes of someday being able to reconcile some Christian stuff with epicureanism, having been experienced in the former and trying to learn as much as I can from the latter, in a way I could help others like us navigate more easily out of that unpleasantness if they are feeling it. I sort of think some of the teachings of Jesus have been stolen and changed to fit the magical and idealist thinking of religion, but that there may be teachings of his in line with Epicurean Philosophy.

Anyway, wanted to chime in to let you know I feel you, and would love to know more about your journey too. 😊

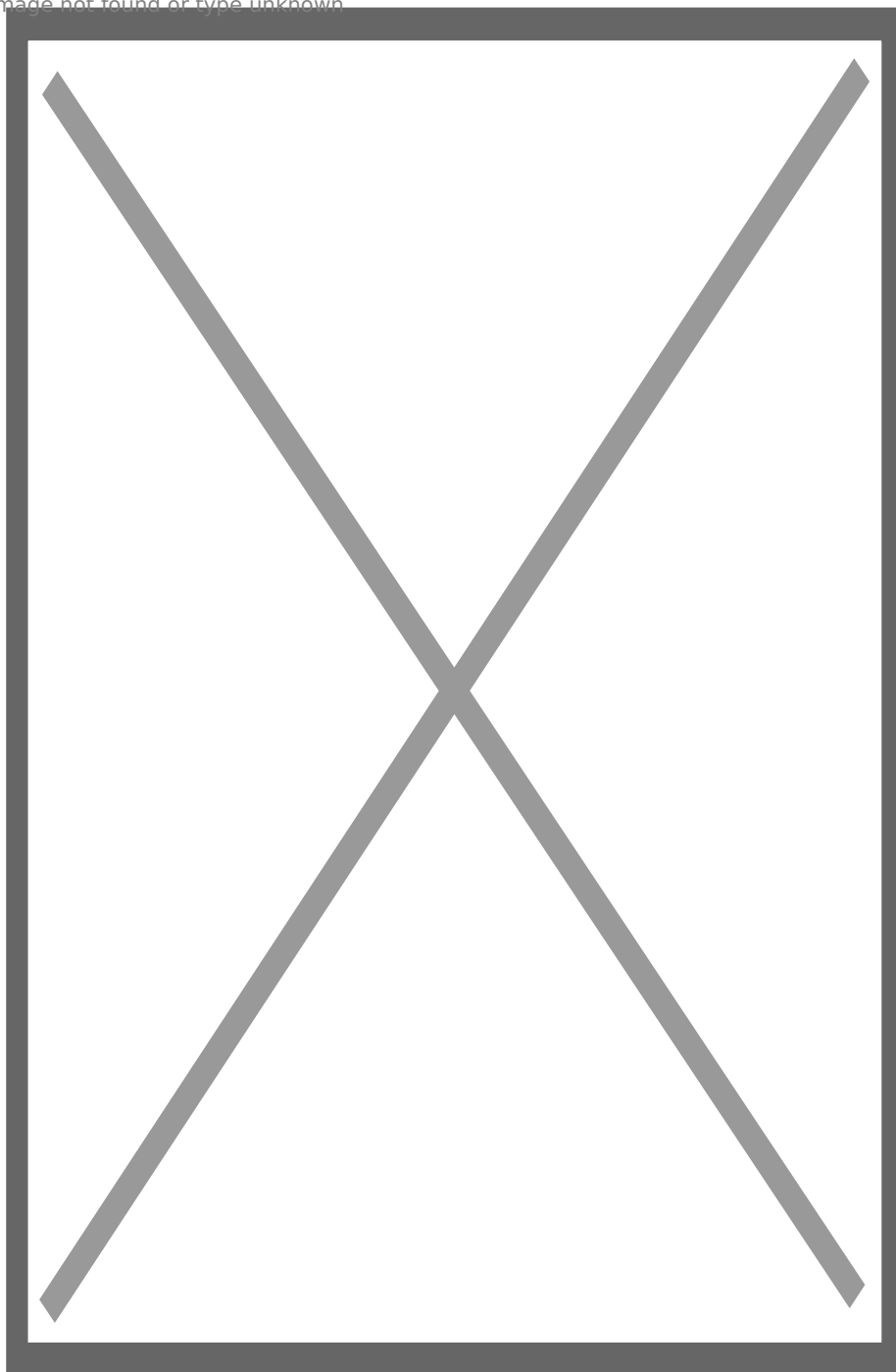
Post by “Don” of June 16, 2022 at 10:10 AM

[Quote from camotero](#)

. I sort of think some of the teachings of Jesus have been stolen and changed to fit the magical and idealist thinking of religion,

Are you familiar with Thomas Jefferson's Bible editing?

Image not found or type unknown



[Jefferson Bible - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org)
en.wikipedia.org

Post by “Cassius” of June 16, 2022 at 10:15 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2537-any-application-of-epicurean-theology-to-the-christan-god-s/>

[Quote from camotero](#)

I do find that my older child is benefitting from me trying to help him understand the world rather than thinking magically, but also I worry it will make him an odd child in a very religious society like the one my family lives in. He's definitely not going to catholic school, and I found a school that is more in line with humanism values, so there's hope there.

I have no expertise in this subject whatsoever, so take this with that caveat. And I would not send a child to a religious school, all things being equal. But I question whether many "public" schools are any better. I would think the end result is that parents have to devote a lot of attention to "deprogramming" whatever is being taught to their children. An Epicurean "home schooling curriculum" for young people (or for any age 😊) would be highly desirable and ought to be a long term goal.

Post by “Don” of June 16, 2022 at 10:33 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

An Epicurean "home schooling curriculum" for young people (or for any age 😊) would be highly desirable and ought to be a long term goal

Hmm... I'm gonna have to push back on Cassius's comment a little there. I'm skeptical of homeschooling of any ilk. I'm sure some parents who do homeschooling can do a satisfactory job, but it always struck me as insular and isolating. School is both educational as well as social. I'm not going to sugarcoat the school experience, especially in adolescence it can be hard! But my entire family are products of a public education. We turned out okay (I think).

And Epicurus did rail against the indoctrination of his day, παιδεία. But he also taught in the Garden. No doubt to groups and individuals.

But education doesn't *stop* with formal instruction. Parents do need to be involved with their children. Encourage creativity and curiosity. Foster what brings the children pleasure. Take pleasure in seeing your children experiencing fun.

Parenting is HARD. There are times where it is a pain! But, to me, this is a classic example of experiencing pain for future pleasure. Seeing one's children grow to curious, kind adults is a pleasure.

But to wind back to Cassius, I could see a "Sunday School" curriculum being helpful. Some kind of supplemental home study. But it shouldn't necessarily be imposed on one's children. It should ideally be organic. Get them out into nature. Encourage them to use their senses. Explore! Get them to ask questions. Find evidence-based material answers. Make it fun! Make it pleasurable!

Post by "Cassius" of June 16, 2022 at 10:39 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

But to wind back to Cassius, I could see a "Sunday School" curriculum being helpful. Some kind of supplemental home study.

Right! Supplemental home study is the main thing I was thinking about, at least for most of us. As usual, depends on the context and what options are available.

[Quote from Don](#)

But it shouldn't necessarily be imposed on one's children.

I agree with that and the rest of the paragraph as well. But to some extent we do make lots of choices for our children, so choosing to address the subject shouldn't be ignored. An interesting example to include in a discussion of that would be the example of "Hedea" in "A Few Days In Athens" who seems to stand for the position that formal instruction might not be necessary, but perhaps that is a very unusual case.

Post by "Eikadistes" of June 16, 2022 at 11:09 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Are you familiar with Thomas Jefferson's Bible editing?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jefferson_Bible?wprov=sfla1

There is an interesting historical connection between Epicurean philosophy and (heterodox) Christianity at the intersection of the American Revolution. While Colonial religion was dominated by the evangelism of the First Great Awakening, a notable group of critics (including *Ethan Allen*, a founder of Vermont, *Thomas Young*, organizer of the Boston Tea Party, and, of course, *Thomas Jefferson*, who re-wrote the Bible) represented a piety apart from religion.

Rather than dispense with Christianity altogether, some of these individuals sought to re-orient the narrative of *Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ* into the narrative of *Jesus of Nazareth*, a simple moral reformer in ancient Judaea. They generally rejected the *Epistles* and *Revelation* in their entirety, and saw Christian Churches as being subversive political institutions that repeatedly changed their doctrines to accommodate political interests.

At the same time, critics of Christianity heavily employed religious language that evangelists have cited to support the "American is a Christian Nation" argument. A closer reading of that language, and the philosophical context in which it was written, however, shows that "God" and "Creator" refer to "Nature" and never to "Jesus". Even so, many of these critics glorified the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth as the most morally "perfect" figure in history.

Nonetheless, these critics stand in contrast with the Christian authorities of the time (most notably the Catholic Church), so they are not great examples of typical Christians (if Christians at all). They derived their positions from a line that begins with *De Rerum Natura*, and grows through Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, and then eventually American Revolutionaries like Jefferson who held on to some aspects of Christianity after applying an Epicurean critique.

If one is intending to interface with Christianity in a way that does not completely dismiss the tradition while maintaining an Epicurean position, Jefferson's approach seems appropriate.

Post by “Don” of June 16, 2022 at 11:13 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Right! Supplemental home study is the main thing I was thinking about,

That's what I suspected. Nonetheless, figured I'd go off on homeschooling.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

to some extent we do make lots of choices for our children

Fully agree! When it comes to some choices we make, it's best to make it as organic as possible though. Let the children be participants instead of captives. Make the pedagogy experiential and interactive instead of the "sage on the stage."

Post by "Cassius" of June 16, 2022 at 11:17 AM

Nate thanks for that reference:

[Quote from Nate](#)

Thomas Young, organizer of the Boston Tea Party,

Back when I was researching that period years of go I started with Paine's Age of Reason and from Paine and found Ethan Allen's book (Reason the Only Oracle of Man) which is a little rough compared to Paine). I also found Elihu Palmer's "Principles of Nature" and the writings of [Thomas Cooper](#).

But I never found a reference to "Thomas Young." Do you know if he wrote anything worth reading? Probably this list of books here deserves a thread of its own for people who would like to research and cite "Founding Fathers" of the USA for reference in advocating Epicurean viewpoints. Even if they were "deists" or didn't mention Epicurus specifically I can imagine this kind of material being useful to lots of people. I didn't originally consider it but of course now in retrospect I should include Frances Wright's AFDIA in that list too.

Post by "Cassius" of June 16, 2022 at 11:19 AM

This is the section I need to reorganize and expand that has this kind of material already:

[1700's - 1800's](#)

Post by "Eikadistes" of June 16, 2022 at 12:03 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

But I never found a reference to "Thomas Young." Do you know if he wrote anything worth reading? Probably this list of books here deserves a thread of its own for people who would like to research and cite "Founding Fathers" of the USA for reference in advocating Epicurean viewpoints. Even if they were "deists" or didn't mention Epicurus specifically I can imagine this kind of material being useful to lots of people. I didn't originally consider it but of course now in retrospect I should include Frances Wrights AFDIA in that list too.

Thomas Young was an intellectual mentor to Ethan Allen and perhaps a more devoted contributor to the Lucretius-inspired group of Colonial "Deists" than his contemporaries. I recently read about him in *Nature's God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic* by Matthew Stewart. It is a dense read, but very informative, and I recommend it.

Young's fellow citizens regularly accused him of being "a man of no morals," an "infamous character," and, of course, an "infidel." And Young--this is perhaps the most unusual thing about him--regularly responded with daring public confessions in which he let it be known, in so many words, that if with such terms his antagonists meant to identify him a deist, then they were right. Rushing to his defense after one assault on the doctor's unacceptable creed, his fellow members of the Boston Committee of Correspondence marveled that on his journey through life he had accumulated many friends of high character notwithstanding the fact that "uniform throughout, he appears in all places to have declared his sentiments on all subjects, natural, civil, and religious." The thing about Young, everyone agreed, was that he could not keep his mouth shut. When he died, the nation he served found it convenient to forget such a troublesome individual. Let him now face the consequence in the afterlife whose reality he so blasphemously denied, they said, and they moved on.

Young's philosophical oeuvre is not large or systematic, and it is sometimes obtuse, as one might expect from a self-taught medicine man moonlighting as a global revolutionary. Yet its neglect turns out to be the most damaging of the many unfortunate consequences of his omission from the history books. In the uncomfortably personal confessions he committed to print, Young tells us what it was like to come of age as a deist in prerevolutionary America. In his sundry philosophical treatises, he articulates a form of deism that is substantially more radical than that which has traditionally figured in the stories America tells itself about its philosophical heritage. And he makes clear that, at least in his own mind, this radical philosophy was the axis on which the Revolution turned. For him, the project to free the American people from the yoke of King George was part of a grander project to liberate the world from the ghostly tyranny of supernatural religion. (Ibid. 22-23)

Post by “beasain” of June 16, 2022 at 12:22 PM

[Mathitis Kipouros](#),

So my point was that where in the past they copied philosophical concepts even from materialists, now they copy high tech systems 😊 to upgrade their marketing strategy.

For me it is strange to see how much high tech is used by religious groups that adhere to a literal interpretation of the Bible. I would think that in their purity they ban all technology that is not mentioned in the Bible, but they use the same high tech marketing technics as ordinary industries.

I was in dialogue with such a group, and as they speak in Bible citations they had their iPads with hypertext, even the children!, while I tried to find it as quickly as possible in my Bible.

Maybe my comment was not that important...

Post by “Don” of June 16, 2022 at 12:27 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

Nature's God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic by Matthew Stewart. It is a dense read, but very informative, and I recommend it.

Added to my Good Reads "Want to read" list! Thanks!

Post by “Cassius” of June 16, 2022 at 12:45 PM

Labelling Thomas Young as more radical increases the odds he was affirmatively Epicurean. We need to investigate and find out what texts are available! 😊

Post by “Don” of June 16, 2022 at 12:51 PM

FYI

[Thomas Young \(American revolutionary\) - Wikipedia](#)

Post by “Root304” of June 23, 2022 at 1:44 AM

Thanks so much for the discussion. Lots of rich threads to pick up and examine and tons of great resources to look at regarding Epicureanism and Christianity.

I've had roughly a month wrestling with this topic, exploring disparate interests, memories, fears and other feelings that prompted the initial post. I think ultimately I should trust that sense of aversion to presenting Christianity in the contemporaneous form and trust the way I have already have been introducing Christian culture to them: through music. I often have music from the Early Music genre (European Medieval and Renaissance) playing around the house; Carmina Carolingiana in the mornings, El Cant de la Sibil or Jordi Savall as background music during the day, and I use to play Hildegard von Bingen as I tucked them in at night. I think that will could give them a entry point into understanding Catholic or Christian culture in some way should they ever want to go further into it, while not being an unnatural move on my part. I love all that old music.

I reached out to my close friends and community and hosted a Summer Solstice event the other day. We had lots of fun reciting some words, building a fire, doing some simple witchery and leaving offerings and libations out. I realized I ought to trust the deep interests I have in folklore, ritual, anthropology and Epicureanism that I, and members of my community, could share with my kids with my heart truly in it in a way that is most playful and pleasurable. So I'm going to build a festival calendar around Eikas, intermixed with Solstices and Equinoxes, and draw from folklore traditions and what other things might interest my community of Friends to build a sort of hearth religion.

Post by “Cassius” of June 23, 2022 at 7:35 AM

In the music, does it have words to it? There is lots of religious music I like but would choke on the words that accompany it.

Post by "Don" of June 23, 2022 at 8:35 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

In the music, does it have words to it? There is lots of religious music I like but would choke on the words that accompany it.

LOL... That's why I did this:
<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/wcf/index.php?...wall/comment196>

Post by "Root304" of June 23, 2022 at 9:33 AM

[Cassius](#)

Yeah. The words are usually in Latin, so for me not knowing much Latin elevates the music for me.

[Don](#)

Loved it! I'll be contemplating Epicurean devotional music the rest of the day.

Post by "Kalosyni" of June 23, 2022 at 9:35 AM

[Quote from Root304](#)

...lots of fun reciting some words, building a fire, doing some simple witchery and leaving offerings and libations out.So I'm going to build a festival calendar around Eikas, intermixed with Solstices and Equinoxes, and draw from folklore traditions and what other things might interest my community of Friends to build a sort of hearth religion.

This sounds interesting, a very eclectic take that you created for your own enjoyment.

And yet when you say "witchery" does this include some Wiccan hopes that one can influence the material world in a supernatural way? In my own studies of Wicca, I have come to see it as

"the other side of the coin" with regard to Christianity. Both believe that there is a supernatural essence which can be influenced - one through prayer to God, the other through ritual and worship dedicated to pagan Goddesses (and perhaps somewhat similar to Ancient Greek religion).

Yet Epicurus teaches that the gods live in bliss and have no concern for man. The world is material, and nothing can come from nothing.

Imagine in Epicurus' time, that he was surrounded on all sides by people who believed in the myths and the power of the gods. I can see why he would continue to participate in the rituals for several reasons: 1) because there was pleasure in the festivals, and 2) he would have gotten a lot flak from everyone around him (non-Epicureans) if he hadn't participated in the rituals.

In some sense the only parallel here is that if you are Epicurean and you find yourself surrounded by Christians family members, then perhaps you might join in with them by bowing your head during prayer before meals.

Now personally, I would hesitate to create any new rituals to Greek or other pagan gods/goddesses, as fun as it could be -- there is not any necessity and it creates "supernatural" ideations.

Post by "Don" of June 23, 2022 at 10:10 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Imagine in Epicurus' time, that he was surrounded on all sides by people who believed in the myths and the power of the gods. I can see why he would continue to participate in the rituals for several reasons: 1) because there was pleasure in the festivals, and 2) he would have gotten a lot flak from everyone around him (non-Epicureans) if he hadn't participated in the rituals

I would add a third choice: I am coming to believe that one reason Epicurus took pleasure in the rites, festivals, sacrifices, etc. was that he intellectually recontextualized (sorry, neologism there?) them to coincide with his philosophy of the gods. As Lucretius talks about saying "Dionysus" but actually meaning "wine," Mother Earth but meaning the fertile, productive powers of the natural world. *If* that is the basis for ritual, I don't see any problem. Especially since there groups like Hellenion are trying to resurrect a Greek-inspired practice:

[Hellenion](#)

Post by “Root304” of June 23, 2022 at 10:49 AM

[Kalosyni](#)

We are taking it more from a sense of play and community, and trying to be inclusive of what expression our Friends want to bring to the occasion. Our "magic" consisted of writing an intention on a bay leaf and tossing it in the fire. I don't think we will ever get into any serious pagan stuff, and my wife and I being the hosts are more excited about bringing folklore and norm-breaking social games to the event given that some people that attend aren't religious or in to spirituality at all. Like we want to have our take on an anglo-saxon boasting ceremony for example as well as explore the 3 skills of the poets from the celtic tradition, that kind of thing. I am at work and can't explain in depth but maybe I could start a thread some time about different ceremonial events this community thinks could be done at an Eikas.

Post by “Root304” of June 23, 2022 at 12:16 PM

[Don](#)

Another way I can look at interaction with the Gods is from a psychological and even poetic lenses, which is sort of what I was reaching for in the other post about sensitivity. Is experiencing Pleasure framed as a sort of nihilistic tickling of the nervous system in our meatsuits in a particular way or do we take the idea of an Epicurean Soul to mean the total package of human experience; our context, emotional and sensory depth, our passions and interests, our challenges, our relationship to ideas and people, our broadening and changing understanding as we journey through life, our histories and our relationship to that history and the core memories that shaped us. These could all be interacted with in various therapeutic, artistic, religious or ritualistic ways, that brings about ataraxia (a quieted mind) in the Epicurean sense of no longer fearing the gods, superstition or death. Of course they could also be interacted with the manipulate us as well.

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 23, 2022 at 12:28 PM

[Quote from Root304](#)

We are taking it more from a sense of play and community, and trying to be inclusive of what expression our Friends want to bring to the occasion. Our "magic" consisted of writing an intention on a bay leaf and tossing it in the fire.

Okay thank you for clarifying, because when I saw your post # 36 above end with the word "religion" then I got a bit of a tense feeling. So now I understand a little better and sounds like it is a creation of psychological symbolism used as a tool for self-exploration and self-knowledge.

And also I will again remember to consider how everyone has their unique and individual way of moving toward an enjoyable and pleasurable life.

Post by “Don” of June 23, 2022 at 12:39 PM

[Quote from Root304](#)

the idea of an Epicurean Soul to mean the total package of human experience; our context, emotional and sensory depth, our passions and interests, our challenges, our relationship to ideas and people, our broadening and changing understanding as we journey through life, our histories and our relationship to that history and the core memories that shaped us.

I'd say that one... with the caveat that "soul" does NOT imply something that can exist outside the "meatsuit". The ψυχή psykhē / psyche is inextricably part of our physical, material, atomic makeup.

Post by “Root304” of June 23, 2022 at 1:04 PM

[Don](#)

Definitely. Just like the God of the Gaps idea, the immaterial Soul recedes off into nothing once we study the intricacies of our physical bodies and the subjective experiences involved in living.

Haha I just use the "meatsuit" term as a sort of push back against the idea being used by Atheists and non-atheists alike to describe secular worldviews. Just kinda gross objectifying of ourselves.

Post by “Cassius” of June 23, 2022 at 2:37 PM

[Quote from Root304](#)

or do we take the idea of an Epicurean Soul to mean the total package of human experience; our context, emotional and sensory depth, our passions and interests, our challenges, our relationship to ideas and people, our broadening and changing understanding as we journey through life, our histories and our relationship to that history and the core memories that shaped us.

I think it is absolutely clear that this is what Epicurus meant, and it is logically compelled by dividing all feelings into either pleasure or pain.

But you are right to highlight this as something that needs to be examined and repeatedly stated, because the number one attack on Epicurus IMHO is based on NOT admitting this wide definition. Those people argue that Epicurus was talking about what we might refer to as immediate bodily sensations, and that he did not mean to include mental / emotional issues at all. I think "those people" are clearly wrong, but this issue cannot be taken for granted, and it needs to be hammered home anytime there is any doubt as to whether the people in a discussion understand this point.