

Welcome Beasain!

Post by “Cassius” of June 5, 2022 at 4:11 PM

Welcome [beasain](#) ! **Please Note:** In order to minimize spam registrations, all new registrants must respond in this thread to this welcome message within 72 hours of its posting, or their accounts will be deleted. All that is required is a "Hello!" but of course we hope you will introduce yourselves further and join one or more of our conversations.

This is the place for students of Epicurus to coordinate their studies and work together to promote the philosophy of Epicurus. Please remember that all posting here is subject to our [Community Standards / Rules of the Forum](#) our [Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean](#) and our [Posting Policy statements](#) and [associated posts](#).

Please understand that the leaders of this forum are well aware that many fans of Epicurus may have sincerely-held views of what Epicurus taught that are incompatible with the purposes and standards of this forum. This forum is dedicated exclusively to the study and support of people who are committed to classical Epicurean views. As a result, this forum is not for people who seek to mix and match some Epicurean views with positions that are inherently inconsistent with the core teachings of Epicurus.

All of us who are here have arrived at our respect for Epicurus after long journeys through other philosophies, and we do not demand of others what we were not able to do ourselves. Epicurean philosophy is very different from other viewpoints, and it takes time to understand how deep those differences really are. That's why we have membership levels here at the forum which allow for new participants to discuss and develop their own learning, but it's also why we have standards that will lead in some cases to arguments being limited, and even participants being removed, when the purposes of the community require it. Epicurean philosophy is not inherently democratic, or committed to unlimited free speech, or devoted to any other form of organization other than the pursuit by our community of happy living through the principles of Epicurean philosophy.

One way you can be most assured of your time here being productive is to tell us a little about yourself and personal your background in reading Epicurean texts. It would also be helpful if you could tell us how you found this forum, and any particular areas of interest that you have which would help us make sure that your questions and thoughts are addressed.

In that regard we have found over the years that there are a number of key texts and references which most all serious students of Epicurus will want to read and evaluate for themselves. Those include the following.

1. ["Epicurus and His Philosophy"](#) by Norman DeWitt
2. [The Biography of Epicurus by Diogenes Laertius.](#) This includes the surviving letters of Epicurus, including those to [Herodotus](#), [Pythocles](#), and [Menoceus](#).
3. ["On The Nature of Things"](#) - by Lucretius (a poetic abridgement of Epicurus' "On Nature")
4. ["Epicurus on Pleasure"](#) - By Boris [Nikolsky](#)
5. The chapters on Epicurus in [Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks On Pleasure."](#)
6. [Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section](#)
7. [Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section](#)
8. The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda - [Martin Ferguson Smith translation](#)
9. [A Few Days In Athens" - Frances Wright](#)
10. Lucian Core Texts on Epicurus: (1) [Alexander the Oracle-Monger](#), (2) [Hermotimus](#)
11. [Philodemus "On Methods of Inference"](#) (De Lacy version, including his appendix on relationship of Epicurean canon to Aristotle and other Greeks)
12. "The Greeks on Pleasure" -Gosling & Taylor Sections on Epicurus, especially the [section on katastematic and kinetic pleasure](#) which explains why ultimately this distinction was not of great significance to Epicurus.

It is by no means essential or required that you have read these texts before participating in the forum, but your understanding of Epicurus will be much enhanced the more of these you have read.

And time has also indicated to us that if you can find the time to read one book which will best explain [classical Epicurean philosophy](#), as opposed to most modern "eclectic" interpretations of Epicurus, that book is Norman DeWitt's ***Epicurus And His Philosophy.***

Welcome to the forum!

Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean

1. Not "flourishing," "human potential," "self-actualization," or "meaningfulness," but happiness grounded in the feeling of pleasure.
2. Not "absence of pain" as a full statement of the goal of life, but "the Feelings are two, pleasure and pain" and "Pleasure is the beginning and the end of a happy life."
3. Not virtue for the sake of virtue, but virtue as instrumental for the attainment of pleasure.
4. Not "the greatest good for the greatest number," but "Every desire must be confronted with this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished and what if it is not?"
5. Not "humanism," "transhumanism," "individualism," "collectivism," "egoism," "altruism," "social progress," "Marxism," "democracy," "tyranny," or any "one size fits all" political ideal of any kind, but social structure based on friendship which "is formed and maintained by means of a community of life among those who have reached the fullness of pleasure."
6. Not "hard determinism," but "some things happen from necessity, some from chance, and others through our own choice."
7. Not "supernaturalism," but "materialism."
8. Not "supernatural gods," or "life after death," but confidence in a fully material universe and "for those men for whom wisdom is possible, and who do seek it, such men may truly live as gods."
9. Not only "short term hedonism," but "it is to continuous pleasures that I invite you."
10. Not "rationalism," but "all reason is dependent upon sensations."
11. Not fearful of death nor careless of losing life, but valuing life for the opportunity of pleasure it brings.

Our Posting Policy At EpicureanFriends.com:

"No Partisan Politics," "No Supernatural Religion," and "No Absolute Virtue"

This forum is dedicated to promoting the philosophy of Epicurus, and not to any partisan political positions whether "left," "right," or "center." The task of rediscovering Epicurean philosophy requires that such discussions be held elsewhere. Posts violating this rule are subject to removal.



Epicurean philosophy firmly rejects the viewpoint that there are any supernatural forces or absolute virtues or Platonic ideals of any kind. Argument which is based on supernatural claims, or "absolute" virtues or ideals of any kind, are in violation of this rule and subject to removal.

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Post by “beasain” of June 5, 2022 at 6:20 PM

Salve Cassius!

I was browsing through all the material and it is like a gold mine. Thanks to everybody for their contributions. It is pure pleasure discovering all this!

Let's introduce myself. I am from Spain and was the worst student in Latin, although I adored ancient philosophy. I studied geology and specialized in geochemistry. A friend of mine who is a teacher of Latin and Greek, and Epicurist draw my attention some years ago on the *De Rerum Natura*, and when reading it I was so amazed that somebody in the first century B.C. was able to describe Brownian motion of dust in a sun beam with the exact explanation, as in the beginning of the 20th century was used by Einstein to definitively demonstrate the existence of atoms (and to approximatively calculate their radius).

The perfect explanation of smell, the way eyes works (although not with atoms but photons as elementary particles), and a few other things. But also the ethics seemed to me so modern, more or less the values that were taught to me by my liberal parents. I started quite intensely digging deeper and discovered that this was one of the principle Roman influences since the Renaissance. How is it possible that nobody told me about Lucretius - Epicurus at school, or at university?

In my 101 course of philosophy at the university it was the first half hour some name dropping of Pre-socratics, then Socrates-Plato-Aristotle-Augustinus and a lot of Descartes (never enjoyed him), Kant (I was not bright enough to get it), Hegel (how boring), some utilitarists etc., Nietzsche (I liked him, and discover now his texts on epicurism), some Marx (nobody told us about the PhD of Marx on Epicurus), a bit about Kierkegaard and some other melancholic continental philosopher, the enigmatic Heidegger (very important!), some existentialism. And still... if you open a one volume of the history of philosophy, it is remarkable that there are no women (Simonne De Beauvoir maybe) and no or almost nothing reasonable about Hellenism (and in each case almost nothing about Epicurism). I remember the remark of the professor that philosophy is basically the footnote to the work of Plato. This is the way you introduce young people to philosophy?it seems to me a kind of indoctrination, just the opposite of learn to think. What are the reasons of hiding Hellenistic philosophy, and especially Epicurism? The Plato mafia of Hegel? 😊

If even Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, wrote a poem on Lucretius, and Lucretius makes some useful suggestions on evolution of better formed organisms, would it be too daring to think that there was some transmission here too? (I researched this a bit and nobody has demonstrated this yet, but it is far from unthinkable in my dilettante opinion).

But I come here especially to seriously learn and understand, and I fully support the claim to

give publicity to an 'orthodox' epicurism, although I guess that there is no THE correct interpretation, and that this is an ongoing investigation, no?

I found Epicurean Friends through San Google (as we call it in Spain).

I have also a question. Maybe it is not exactly on its place here, but you will tell me where it would be more appropriate, I hope.

¿Is there somebody that has an opinion on the book of the French philosopher Pierre Vesperini "Lucrèce : archéologie d'un classique européen?" For those who understand French there is a quite interesting interview here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXqcu3BAAY>

Basically, he defends, based on a serious investigation (his PhD work) that Lucretius was in fact like Virgil a extremely talented professional poet that wrote on demand, as a supposed client of Gaius Memmius, (apparently a kind of corrupt senator - who was not at that time? - and according to a letter of Cicero the owner of the house of Epicurus in Athens, which he even wanted to destroy to build a new house for himself). The thesis of Pierre Vesperini, after closely investigating all the available evidence, and he discovered a lot of unknown evidences, is that Lucretius would be just a professional poet without links with Epicurism, which of course sounds as blasphemy to most of us. In each case the book is a treasure for new information about the circumstances and the early reception of this wonderful poem. (I have the impression that Vesperini excludes the thesis that Lucretius operated as a client and a professional poet, but indeed was passionate about epicurism and an expert too).

Post by “Don” of June 5, 2022 at 8:22 PM

[beasain](#) Welcome aboard, and thank you very much for the introduction to yourself and how you arrived here!

Post by “Cassius” of June 5, 2022 at 8:59 PM

Yes, Beasain, thank you for that wonderful introduction. That is just the kind of "intellectual history" that contributes so much to the forum and to further discussion. Very fascinating and thank you!

As to your first main point, certainly it is an absolute travesty that Epicurus is given so little recognition in Academic circles today. I hope we can play a small part here to motivate people to write new material and take the story of Epicurus to new generations who very much need it.

As to Pierre Vesperini, I have not heard of him or his thesis, but it would be great to one day get an english version of his research. Even small tidbits of new information, or even informed speculation, about Lucretius would be interesting.

As you indicate I find it hard to accept that Lucretius was anything but a confirmed Epicurean, but that does not mean that he spent his whole life that way, or that he didn't write on widely different subjects as well. I hope we can one day find more material to allow us to speculate further about his background.

Again welcome to the forum!

Post by “Martin” of June 6, 2022 at 1:00 AM

Welcome Beasain!

Lucretius must have done extensive studies of Epicurus' philosophy before or while writing the poem to provide so many details and repeatedly addresses Memmius directly to persuade him of Epicurus' philosophy. Therefore, a statement that Lucretius had no links with Epicureanism is not convincing.

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 6, 2022 at 10:17 AM

Welcome to the forum Beasain!

Thank you for your introduction and for sharing about your reading of Lucretius.

[Quote from beasain](#)

What are the reasons of hiding Hellenistic philosophy, and especially Epicurism? The Plato mafia of Hegel?

I don't know enough about Hegalian philosophy, but this question is interesting to me. I tend to focus mostly on the ethics of Epicureanism, and I would say that it is a very subtle teaching that

not everyone can understand. Not only does it require a certain ability to critically think, but it requires one to think outside the box of Western civilization and the abstractions of thinking which come down from Platonic philosophy, and which have been reinforced and continue to be reinforced by Christianity. I think Epicureanism will remain a philosophy only for the few, as it requires one to move beyond "either-or" thinking and live a visceral and sensorial life within the physical world, while always remembering that this very life is all that we have. So we have this focus on the importance of making it a pleasant and pleasurable life, which goes against the current understanding of pleasure -- pleasure as being an escape from responsibility, or pleasure always leading to excess (and even being synonymous to excess). But we who are Epicureans are wiser than this. First we have to overcome all our previous conditioning with regard to experiencing pleasure. So at the beginning, it may seem that dancing with pleasure is like walking across a sharp edge of a razor blade: one misstep and you fall off. But yet with the practice of paying attention, then it is more like learning to ride a bike, and you see that it is quite natural actually, and it is the best way to live.

Post by “beasain” of June 6, 2022 at 12:14 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I don't know enough about Hegelian philosophy, but this question is interesting to me. I tend to focus mostly on the ethics of Epicureanism, and I would say that it is a very subtle teaching that not everyone can understand. Not only does it require a certain ability to critically think, but it requires one to think outside the box of Western civilization and the abstractions of thinking which come down from Platonic philosophy, and which have been reinforced and continue to be reinforced by Christianity.

Yes, I completely agree and epicurism makes me think of a kind of Western local form of Buddhism (There were for sure strong contacts with India in the Hellenic World), but this is not what I want to focus on now. Let's go back to Hegel and the German idealistic philosophy of Hegel. Nothing is better than going to the sources, Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy Part One: Greek Philosophy. Section Two B. Epicurus: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/arch...hp/hpepicur.htm>

Hegel demonstrates in my humble opinion that he doesn't understand (or rather wants to understand) most of Epicurus' work, although he sees something in Epicurus' ethics and some parts are even interesting. But he doesn't mention Lucretius (and not because he was unknown to him; Goethe e.g. for instance was fond of Lucretius). With the perspective of two centuries, Hegel's rejection of atomism is a bit embarrassing, but his History seems to have been very influential and seems still to influence curricula in the Philosophy Departments (I often wonder

if philosophy professors are able to think out of the box 😊 , they seem often so dogmatic to me as an outsider).

Another interesting source is the article of James I Porter, "Epicurus in Nineteenth-Century Germany: Hegel Marx and Nietzsche" from the Oxford Handbook of Epicurus and Epicureanism (2020) (costs about 140\$, but individual articles can sometimes be found in Academia.com): https://www.academia.edu/43798550/Epicu...x_and_Nietzsche (page 3-7 is about Hegel's vision).

The article is also very interesting for the views of Marx and Nietzsche. I think it is worth to be well studied. It comments also in a critical way some apparent flaws in the reasoning of Epicurus and illuminate some of Hegel's critiques (or at least in the few materials of his work that pure luck brought to us). All good excuses to learn more about the works of Epicurus 😊 .

Post by “beasain” of June 6, 2022 at 12:42 PM

[Quote from Martin](#)

Therefore, a statement that Lucretius had no links with Epicureanism is not convincing

I shall try to translate one of the reviews of the book from French to English to give you a flavour of his arguments (mostly about patron-client relations). Although they don't convince me neither (but who am I), they are interesting to learn more about the circumstances. One of the favourite themes of Pierre Vesperini is that literature is studied without exhausting study of the circumstances. Conclusions are made from the lecture, while some historical details, often not well founded, are added, without evaluating the whole range of available evidence.

Post by “beasain” of June 6, 2022 at 12:56 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I hope we can one day find more material to allow us to speculate further about his background.

Maybe in the well known Villa of the Papyrus in Herculaneum. According to what I have read, there should be beneath 30 meters of volcanic deposits be the Latin library of 79 AD. Apparently the directors of Pompeii and Herculaneum don't want to excavate more, because of a lack of funds and expertise to correctly treat the excavated treasures (in the case of Herculaneum houses up two to three floors!). We can dream of that. The Greek library, the only library one conserved, as you know, contained about 900 scrolls that with high tech can be read, curiously a lot related with epicurism, which is not less than an incredible miracle, although miracles don't exist 😊 .

Post by “Cassius” of June 6, 2022 at 2:14 PM

Besain - I particularly thank you for the link to Hegel's summary of Epicurus. I have not read that before, and obviously it is very deep, so I will set up as separate thread where we can discuss it in detail into the future.

Thread

[Hegel's Summary of Epicurus and Epicurean Philosophy](#)

Thanks to @beasain for this link to a detailed presentation of Hegel's views on Epicurus. At the time I am posting this I have not read it, and I am sure there is much room here for both agreement and disagreement, but it is clearly an in-depth article and worth being listed here as reference into the future. Just in case it "goes away" I will paste the full article below too:

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/arch...hp/hpepicur.htm>

[Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy](#)

Part One:...



Cassius

June 6, 2022 at 2:20 PM

Post by “Cassius” of June 6, 2022 at 2:25 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2545-welcome-beasain/>

I also set up a thread for the other article, which looks to be equally interesting - so again, thank you!

Thread

[Article: Epicurus in Nineteenth Century Germany: Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche](#)

Thanks also to @beasain for this link:

[https://www.academia.edu/43798550/Epicu...x and Nietzsche](https://www.academia.edu/43798550/Epicu...x_and_Nietzsche)

epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/2788/

[This link might work for direct download](#)- otherwise navigate from the link above.



Cassius

June 6, 2022 at 2:24 PM

Post by “Root304” of June 9, 2022 at 4:31 PM

Welcome [beasain](#)!

Post by “beasain” of June 24, 2022 at 5:52 AM

An interview with [James Warren on Epicurianism](#). I like James Warren and I like Epicurus

An [interview with Angie Hobbs, David Sedley and James Warren](#) from the beautiful BBC podcasts In our time

Enjoy dear Epicurean friends

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2545-welcome-beasain/>