

# Where To Start?

**Post by “brett” of January 8, 2018 at 11:10 PM**

hi all,

I've been a casual reader of Epicurus' PD's and Vatican sayings since I was introduced in undergrad philosophy 20 years ago. However, interacting with this group, both here and on FB, has shown me that I've been missing SO much in my cursory readings and that Epicureanism is the lost home I've been yearning for.

With that in mind, what is the FIRST book I should read? I'm very well versed in philosophical arguments (minored in logic in undergrad and started but never finished a MA/PHD in philosophy), so I'm open to more dense readings. Perhaps there's an Epicurean reading program someone could point me to.

Thanks,

Brett

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2018 at 11:37 PM**

I am so glad you asked that! There is only ONE answer in my humble opinion, and it is head and shoulders the best introduction to Epicurus:

NORMAN DEWITT's "EPICURUS AND HIS PHILOSOPHY"

<http://newepicurean.com/other-resource...his-philosophy/>

It is out of print but it is not hard to find on Ebay, used book stores, or various other places on the internet.

I would advise anyone reading Epicurus to get this book first. The reasons are many, but they boil down to this: DeWitt makes an effort to present Epicurus in a sympathetic manner, attempting to reconstruct the philosophy as a coherent whole. He shows how Epicurus was reacting against Plato and other opponents of pleasure, and shows how Epicurus differs dramatically both from his Plato and Aristotle and also from the Stoics who came after him. Most every other modern book is an academic presentation that spends more time attacking

Epicurus than presenting his position. If you read DeWitt, and then read the others, you'll have both sides of the story and be better able to make your own judgment. If you never read DeWitt, you'll never really hear the "Epicurean side" of the story.

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**Post by "brett" of January 8, 2018 at 11:39 PM**

I was 'afraid' you'd say that! 😊 I so wished it was in electronic format, but I'll just have to spring for the hard copy.

thanks Cassius.

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**Post by "Cassius" of January 8, 2018 at 11:47 PM**

Brett - I sent you a private message about his. Be sure to check that message, and also be sure to check out the PDF resources I've linked at this page: <http://newepicurean.com/resources/library/>

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**Post by "jbaker" of January 8, 2018 at 11:47 PM**

Norman DeWitt's Epicurus and his Philosophy, without a doubt, particularly if you're already familiar with the PDs and VSs. It can be a difficult book to track down as it's out of print and the price fluctuates drastically but it's really an excellent work.

Here's a curriculum put together by Hiram Crespo, author of Tending the Epicurean Garden (a very good read itself) <http://societyofepicurus.com/self-guided-study-curriculum/> and the Elemental Epicureanism site put together by Cassius Amicus, <http://elementalepicureanism.com/>Edit: Haha, I'm out of practice with forums! I forgot to refresh before hitting reply.

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**Post by "brett" of January 9, 2018 at 8:25 AM**

Thanks jbaker! I will start reading DeWitt immediately. I'll also work through the curriculum you posted. Many thanks

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 9, 2018 at 8:37 AM**

Jason thank you for posting that link to Hiram's curriculum, as I glanced at it again. In as friendly a way as possible this illustrates how my personal approach differs from Hiram's. There is a lot of good material on that page, but am I missing it or does Hiram not have DeWitt's book listed **at all**? Argh. I would tell everyone what I told Belial. Start with, and do not worry about anything else, until you have gone through DeWitt's "Epicurus and His Philosophy." There is nothing like it anywhere. There is a lot of good material in other places, but if you start somewhere else, and get distracted, you will deprive yourself of the chance to hear the full Epicurean side of the argument. That's a risk I don't want anyone to take! 😊 I will tag [Hiram](#) here and urge him to add a prominent reference to Dewitt, and add Haris' book somewhere as well. 😊

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### **Post by “jbaker” of January 9, 2018 at 2:14 PM**

Very good point Cassius. I didn't emphasize it enough but that was my intent behind recommending it first. I should have been explicit! 😄

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### **Post by “Hiram” of January 10, 2018 at 2:02 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Start with, and do not worry about anything else, until you have gone through DeWitt's "Epicurus and His Philosophy." There is nothing like it anywhere.

I wouldn't say "don't worry about anything else" but I will add DeWitt, except is there an affordable version somewhere?

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2018 at 2:09 PM**

Yep that is the problem. The best I can think of to do publicly is to refer people to their local libraries, which generally do have it, and Ebay. We can always encourage them to search for the PDF too, but we have to be discrete.

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**Post by “Hiram” of January 10, 2018 at 2:22 PM**

Added a link to book on Amazon, but we seriously need to make this available to non-bourgeois readers. If DeWitt died over 75 years ago, there's no reason why we shouldn't be able to publish a "Friends of Epicurus" or an Elementary version of his book, probably even with a contemporary re-introduction, commentary and/or study guide, just like we did with Frances Wright.

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**Post by “jbaker” of January 10, 2018 at 2:31 PM**

We've got 15 years to go. He died in '58. For me the question is why is St. Paul and Epicurus, essentially the sequel to Epicurus and his Philosophy (or rather EAHP is the prequel to SPAE from his perspective), in the public domain but not EAHP?

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**Post by “Hiram” of January 10, 2018 at 2:44 PM**

[Quote from jbaker](#)

We've got 15 years to go. He died in '58. For me the question is why is St. Paul and Epicurus, essentially the sequel to Epicurus and his Philosophy (or rather EAHP is the prequel to SPAE from his perspective), in the public domain but not EAHP?

That might be answered in the opening pages of the originals (sometimes authors leave a work in the public domain intentionally, and usually they do this in their opening pages).

Otherwise, I can contact either "Lawyers for the Creative Arts" (they legally advised me when I signed the Humanist Press book contract) or I have lawyers next door to my office where I work that focus on copyright law. I could drop in and quickly ask them one day. This does sound shady.

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### **Post by “Hiram” of January 12, 2018 at 1:29 PM**

Also here's a review of my book [brett](#)

<https://thehumanist.com/magazine/janua...picurean-garden>

And link to it

<http://www.humanistpress.com/tending-the-epicurean-garden.html>

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### **Post by “brett” of January 13, 2018 at 11:17 AM**

Thanks [Hiram](#) !

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### **Post by “Mako” of January 20, 2018 at 12:22 PM**

A little late to the party, but I can support Cassius' confidence in DeWitt's book. In the past, I've picked up and "fell off" the Epicurean wagon several times due to confusion over texts and the business of life. Several months ago I began my first truly successful studies, and I am still challenged to continue learning and applying the texts every day. Cassius may recall pointing out to me the Stoic infiltration into many modern interpretations of Epicurean texts. I had fallen unknowingly into their intended asceticism, and to me Epicurean happiness seemed bleak, until my thinking was corrected. DeWitt makes clear this misinterpretation and meddling in Epicurus' teachings, and suddenly, everything I had been misguided on was clear.

I am not sure if others have access to this sort of system, but the academy which I attend has a subscription to "eBooks Central". There are many reference text websites which universities pay for subscriptions to for their students, and I'm allowed to view a protected copy of the text for 180 days from the date I "selected it" for reading. I would encourage anyone who thinks they may be able to freely access the text through a similar system to follow up with their library department or representative about online access/ordering of this specific text.

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**Post by "Cassius" of January 20, 2018 at 12:28 PM**

Great point Mako thank you!