

[Historical Records] from The Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group

Post by "Cassius" of May 3, 2015 at 1:12 PM

****THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 05/09/2015****

** This is the one hundred and fifth in a series of weekly reports on news from the world of Epicurean Philosophy. Our home base for discussion is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy/> Copies of these posts, and links to active Epicurean websites, are stored at EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com.

** As of tonight, our group has grown to 1684. Last week this time we were 1669. We continue to grow steadily, and we welcome all participants and lurkers. If you apply to participate and don't receive a reply promptly, please send an email to an admin about your interest in the group. We are here to discuss Epicurean Philosophy, have fun, and in the words of Lucian, "strike a blow for Epicurus - that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams, who alone had and imparted true insight into the good, and who brought deliverance to all that consorted with him!"

**Every week I say we have lots of excellent discussion, and this week is not only no exception, it was almost too full to do justice here. Before I get started, I mentioned last week that I would soon have an announcement for a new initiative to help preserve some of the content we are generating on Facebook. That's not quite ready to go, but it will be soon. In the meantime, here are the week's highlights:

**We had a discussion this week of dating the current year (2015) in terms that would be recognizable to Lucretius and Epicurus. It seems tha Lucretius would name this year as (2768 AUC) but with Epicurus we got a number of different answers (2091 and 2768). So we may still need more work on that. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...25973464118282/>

**Elli posted a graphic on VS 41: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26400777408884/>

**Prompted by a post by Alexander Rios, I posted "Fields, Particles, and the Reality We Live In." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26486014067027/> Also: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26413944074234/>

**Also this week Hiram and Alexander posted an excellent Spanish-language interview they gave. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26325070749788/> That prompted me to write "Setting the Stage for the Discussion of Pleasure." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26556700726625/>

**Elli posted a graphic on [PD33](#), which says that justice has no independent existence.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26486637400298/>

**Doug B. posted on "Is it depressing or empowering to think of life as a performance?"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26677037381258/>

**Elli posted on the very difficult VS62 - the one about the anger between parents and children. This is one that is not discussed often enough:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26666660715629/>

**Doug B. also contributed as link to a paper by Bernard Frischer with an imposing title, but is essentially about recruitment among the ancient Epicureans.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26703304045298/>

**Hiram posted a review of his book by blogger Tom Church.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26785464037082/>

**In the first of several related posts, this week, we talked about the issues involved in promoting unadulterated Epicureanism here:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26412780741017/>

**I.V. reminded us of the "Epicurean Year" project.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27036987345263/>

**Elli posted two great graphics paraphrasing Diogenes of Oinoanda: Here
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27096677339294/> and also here:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27126447336317/>

**Uwe F. started a good conversation on euthymia which also involved the Phaeacian analogy from Homer. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26774200704875/>

**Jason B. started "What should Epicureans eat?"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27128484002780/>

**Elli continued her graphic creation this week with a reference to Lucian's Hermetimus:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27242810658014/>

**And in another post dealing with differences between Epicurus and Stoicism, I posted a graphic excerpt from "Happiness: A philosopher's Guide" which did a good job of summarizing basic tenets of Stoicism, which allowed for a clear contrast.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26859490696346/>

**And Elli continued the graphics with "A Philosophy For Marbles"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27282057320756/>

**Ioannis A. posted a good short animated clip which Elli described as "slaves to the slavers"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27366720645623/>

**Yesterday I posted to a clip from Francois Bernier, a friend of Gassendi, who tried to reconcile what the Stoics had said about Epicurus with what he thought was a correct understanding of Epicurus.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27382237310738/>

**Alexander R linked to "More sex doesn't lead to increased happiness."
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27426840639611/>

**I linked to John Lennon's "Imagine" and asked if we could imagine a world truly based on Epicurean pleasure.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27462133969415/>

**With some good assistance from friends, we discussed here how to use the PERSEUS website to find every instance of the word "ataraxia" in their extensive Greco-Roman library.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27467220635573/>

**Alexander R. linked to a table showing "Epicurus vs. Mohammed" in physics.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27683320613963/>

**Hiram linked to "Atoms Here, Atoms There, Atoms Everywhere: Fields or Particles"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...26464474069181/>

**Elli started an excellent discussion on VS78 with a graphic.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27669747281987/>

**And again I swatted at the hornet's nest with "Why Do I Speak Harshly About Stoicism?"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27159647332997/>

**Thanks to Uwe F. we started a discussion on the opening of Book I of Lucretius and the meaning of the Venus/Mars symbolism.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27783143937314/>

**And in the most recent post before this goes to press, I posted my latest explanation of Epicurean Philosophy Through Coffee - "Pleasure is a Dish best served Pure and Smooth."
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...27756357273326/>

**Those are most of the highlights for the week. Thanks to all who participated. We've had another very substantive week of discussion, and I thank everyone who participated. Feel free to post any comments in this thread. I apologize if I missed anyone or anything. As always, if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please add a comment or participate in the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy/> or hop around the internet world of Epicurean Philosophy by checking the links here: EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com

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Live Well!

Cassius Amicus

Post by "Cassius" of May 24, 2015 at 8:49 AM

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 05/24/2015

** This is the one hundred and seventh in a series of weekly reports on news from the world of Epicurean Philosophy. Our home base for discussion is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy>. Copies of these posts, and links to active Epicurean websites, are stored at EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com.

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**Some unavoidable traveling yesterday has delayed me in posting this week's update on the Facebook group, but it has given me more time to think about this week's theme. In recent weeks we have had the usual series of excellent posts and discussions, but there has been an uptick in controversy, some of it helpful, and some of it not.

The issue is exemplified in the extensive discussion of my post this week:

"Query: "Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." Would Epicurus have agreed or disagreed? Why?" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...32027843512844/>

The question posed here proved to be an excellent way to get to the very deep issues that divide those who are truly and primarily fans of Epicurus from those who are primarily fans of other philosophers. But the real issue is not a matter of labels and schools - the real issue is the deep one that Epicurus addressed directly: "What is the goal of life?" There have always been, and apparently always will be, those who for a variety of reasons wish to attack the goal of living devoted to pleasure, and praise life devoted to pain. As Cicero's Toquatus described them as those who hold: "...this mistaken idea of reprobating pleasure and extolling pain ..."

The enemies of pleasure operate under many frameworks. There is a large contingent that embraces the stoic idea of that goes under the guise of suppressing all emotion, but is really oriented toward suppressing pleasure and encouraging pain. But there is also the spirit of

skepticism that lives on in the attitude of eclecticism. These people are so adamantly certain that nothing can be considered true that they insist that there is no need for consistency, no need for intellectual rigor, and that they can combine by sheer force of will the most contradictory ideas into one grab-bag collection. What unites these two is that both the pure stoics *and* the eclectics thrive on the deception of being opaque about their true goals. They extol "happiness" to the skies, and demand that we accept that their goal and their definition of happiness is the same as ours. But if you scratch the surface, the goal of happiness as defined by these people is as drained of pleasure as the surface of the moon.

The pleasures of life can only be purchased at the price of some pain. Epicurean philosophy is devoted to the intelligent application of the facts of reality and human nature to assist us in living with as much happiness as possible, which entails also living with as little pain as possible. But just as with his discussion of "the gods," Epicurus did not write and teach to the "lowest common denominstor." He did not oversimplify the issues and he did not distort his teachings so that even the unwise can understand them. Diogenes Laertius: "However, not every bodily constitution nor every nationality would permit a man to become wise. [VS29](#). "To speak frankly as I study nature I would prefer to speak in oracles that which is of advantage to all men even though it be understood by none, rather than to conform to popular opinion and thus gain the constant praise that comes from the many."

In reading Epicurus on the gods, it is necessary to understand that Epicurus defined "gods" in a non-supernatural way. So when Epicurus said that "gods" exist, he was not talking about the supernatural gods that many people insist on jumping to conclude. If you insist on reading Epicurus superficially, you will totally miss his meaning.

In reading Epicurus on pleasure, it is necessary to understand that Epicurus defined "feeling" as having only two categories - pleasure or pain - and that one's feelings, if not painful, are therefore going to be pleasurable. So when Epicurus talks about the goal of absence of pain, he means pleasure as ordinarily understood, and not some mystical third state of anesthesia that Stoic-minded people embrace and insist on jumping to conclude. Again, if you insist on reading Epicurus superficially, you will totally miss his meaning.

And "insisting on reading Epicurus superficially" is exactly what the majority of pleasure-repressing philosophers have insisted on doing since at least the time of Seneca. "If you can't defeat him, co-opt his words and twist them to support your own" has been their theme for 2000 years. And they have succeeded to the point where it is almost impossible to find a group of people who insist on talking the truth about Epicurean pleasure.

There may be other places I am not aware of, but the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook page, and those sites affiliated with the leadership of this group, are the exceptions. Although we certainly have differences of opinion among ourselves, the unifying theme is that we are rejecting the ascetic view of Epicurus, and we are studying and working to understand once again the pleasure-focused philosophy that is evident when one escapes the jail of the orthodox

framework.

We have promoted in the past and will continue to promote in the future honest and constructive discussion of these issues. But we are not going to loosen our moderation practices to allow the enemies of pleasure to conduct in this group their standard campaign of intimidation and misrepresentation. If you have an open mind about the meaning of pleasure, and you truly wish to study Epicurean philosophy to assist yourself in living happily in a way that ordinary people can understand, then you are welcome and encouraged to participate and post in our group.

If your interest in being here is to snipe against pleasure and suppress discussion, then you are **not** welcome to participate. The About Section and Sticky Post of this group will be enforced in a constructive manner to reinforce the goal of the group and to prevent those who disagree with that goal from disrupting it.

Questions like "is it better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" are of vital interest to everyone. Elli P. in particular, and others as well, gave great responses. They pointed out that in EVERY question, even one as charged as this one, the ultimate answer is always the same. There is no Platonic ideal form, no Aristotelian evaluation of "essences," or looking for "golden means," or "moderation," that answer the question for us. Nor is it possible to succeed in analyzing this question with an eclectic "whatever works" approach which hides the meaning of "works."

Epicurus' doctrine is clear: All pleasure is good, and all questions of what we choose and avoid have to be evaluated according to whether those choices and avoidance bring pleasure or pain. And in the end, since the goal of life is the most possible pleasure AND the least possible pain, only we can evaluate for ourselves how that calculation should be computed.

These are questions and answers that are fundamental to living. Epicurus stood alone against mainstream Greek philosophy with his outlook on answering these questions, and in 2000 years no other school has approached the level of his insight. What people find so hard to understand in many cases is the reason they have failed -- despite their protests about "happiness" -- is that they don't **want** to succeed, because they fundamentally disagree with us that pleasure is desirable for itself.

But pleasure **is** desirable for itself, and the reason that it is so is that Nature has made us that way. If we wish to follow Nature, then we need to study and apply the philosophy of Epicurus. That is what we are working to do in the Epicurean facebook group, and those who share our goal are welcome and encouraged to join us.

****Thanks to all who participated in the the Facebook forum this week. As always, if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please add a comment or participate in the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy/> or hop around the internet world of Epicurean Philosophy by checking the links here: EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com

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Live Well!

Cassius Amicus

Post by "Cassius" of May 30, 2015 at 9:28 PM

****THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 05/30/2015****

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**This week I am posting on time and will return to my traditional format after a couple of important points:

**First, this is a good time to review the options available for those who wish to discuss Epicurus within any of several custom frameworks. This past week we had many discussions on the same topic, and it's clear to me that things are shaping up in this general direction:

1- If you are someone whose views are fully formed, and you've combined several disparate viewpoints into your own personal mix, and you mainly want to talk casually to other people of the same eclectic type, there are several excellent facebook groups including EPISTOBUZEN and "Epicureanism for Modern Times" that you can find by searching facebook.

2- If you are focused primarily on Epicurus, and you want to participate in a forum where people will defend Epicurus strongly from all challenges, then you have two Facebook options. Our open and main group, entitled simply "Epicurean Philosophy," is the home base of this post. Anyone can read the posts there, and all you have to do is ask in order to join. (Note that there is an "About" and a "Sticky" post with our forum rules.)

3 - If you prefer to post in a "private" group where your posts are not readable by outsiders, last week we set up just such a group, "Epicurean Private Garden" and that is now getting off the

ground. Because it is a private group, you cannot find it by searching, and you have to email one of our admins in the open group if you wish to join. Please note that our About and Sticky Post rules in the private forum are the same as the open forum, and the private forum will be moderated to the same standards as the open forum (or perhaps slightly tighter!)

4 - If you are not only focused primarily on Epicurus, but you wish to assist with a forum platform where pro-Epicurean activists can build for the future, check out <https://www.epicureanfriends.com/www.EpicureanFriends.com>. I am working on a FAQ list there, and setting up the forum in such a way that it can be used for reference material in the future. Anyone can read the posts, but only approved members can create new posts or comment.

The second general comment is that recent debates continue to sharpen the issues that separate our Epicurean Philosophy Facebook group from other groups, which are the same that separate Epicurean philosophy from other philosophies. If you are the sort of person whose primary emphasis is Stoicism, Buddhism, or some similar philosophy, and you have concluded that "nothingness" or "escape from pain" is your primary focus in life, then you are going to be more at home in one of the other groups listed above, and not in the Epicurean Philosophy Group. You are welcome to read and participate in the Epicurean Philosophy Group, but you are going to find that those views will be challenged vigorously, as the Epicureans challenged them in the ancient world. Unfortunately, we are finding on a fairly regular basis that people who are committed to opposing viewpoints wish to come into the main group and argue their anti-Epicurean positions for purpose or argument, and not because they are genuinely interested in supporting Epicurean views. Such posts are in violation of our "About" section, and in the end such people will be removed from the group. The reason for that is simple: We are dedicated to providing a reliable source of EPICUREAN philosophy to those who come by with a sincere interest in learning. We are not going to allow anti-Epicurean arguments to remain unanswered in the group, and after a while it simply becomes too distracting to reply to them all. Check out either of the groups mentioned above and you will see an eclectic combination of ideas with little way to differentiate them if you are not already familiar with Epicurean philosophy. If you come to the main group you should not have that problem.

*** Much of the division comes down to this: Some people - MANY people, in fact - are happy to endorse Epicurus and study him, but they do so because they believe that his "absence of pain" remarks make him a kind of Super-Stoic, more ascetic even than the famous philosophers of Stoicism. Such people believe that Epicurus preached that we should pursue only "Necessary" pleasures, which they define as little more than breathing, drinking water, and eating bread while locked in their cave.

The administrators of the Epicurean Facebook Page differ in the finer points of their positions on this issue, but they uniformly reject the characterization of Epicurus that I just mentioned. In general they hold to a view stated well by Thomas Jefferson and quoted today by Alexander Rios from Jefferson's "Head and Heart" letter:

**** Let the gloomy monk, sequestered from the world, seek unsocial pleasures in the bottom of his cell! Let the sublimated philosopher grasp visionary happiness while pursuing phantoms dressed in the garb of truth! Their supreme wisdom is supreme folly; & they mistake for happiness the mere absence of pain. Had they ever felt the solid pleasure of one generous spasm of the heart, they would exchange for it all the frigid speculations of their lives, which you have been vaunting in such elevated terms.****

The Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group, and the web pages set up by its core administrators, are dedicated to pointing the way back to an understanding of Epicurus that gives full effect to his philosophy, and does not stand it on its head through an out-of-context reading of a few passages in the letter to Menoeceus. All of us are happy to explain why those passages do NOT mean that Epicurus was an ascetic or a Stoic, but our primary goal is to explain that to people of good faith who really want to know, and not to people whose primary goal is to argue for argument's sake, and otherwise distract us from the work that we are doing to research, write, and reinvigorate the Epicurean movement.

--- End of sermon ---

This week Hiram continued with a series of good background posts on Epicurean theory. These included:

Reasonings About Philodemus on the Stoics -
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...34248633290765/>

The Pleasure - Aversion Faculty <https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/2015/05/20/the...n-introduction/>

A Notice that the Partially Examined Life Website will be reading "A Few Days In Athens"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...35105996538362/>

A post on the "Book of Community"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...34770049905290/>

Reasonings about Philodemus on Music
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...36031499779145/>

Epicurus' Instructions on Innovations:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...36074026441559/>

*** This week has also been an excellent one for "memes" put together by Panagiotis Alexiou and Elli Pensa. Here are a few:

On Friendship - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...34327403282888/>

On the Categories of the Desires -
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...34328083282820/>

On [Death is Nothing To US](https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...34751746573787/) - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...34751746573787/>

On Diogenes of Oinoanda's passage on "Shouting to all Greeks and Non-Greeks that PLEASURE is the end of life" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...33478563367772/>

On Principal Doctrine Four: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...35473289834966/>

On Principal Doctrine Five: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...36008823114746/>

On Principal Doctrine Three: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...35473183168310/>

On Epicurus Replies to Zen: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...35969573118671/>

On Vatican Saying Eleven: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...36075223108106/>

*** I also want to mention a post that Dragan made this week about marriage, which contains some good commentary, especially by Elli - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...35121579870137/>

There's more that I did not capture here, but this post is too long already -

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Live Well!

Cassius Amicus

Post by "Cassius" of June 6, 2015 at 8:14 PM

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 06/06/2015

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**This week we had a particularly good set of posts on core Epicurean doctrines, and tonight (and going forward) I plan to focus on making sure you didn't miss the most important ones, rather than try to list every one.

We had a series of excellent graphics prepared by several people. These are excellent for sharing, and I hope as many group members as possible will post and share them on their own timelines.

First, Panagiotis A. produced a series on the [Principal Doctrines](#). Each of those generated excellent discussion, and I am listing them as follows:

**PD 6 - To secure protection from men anything is a natural good, by which you may be able to attain this end. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...37785612937067/>

**PD 7 - Some men want fame and status, thinking that they would thus make themselves secure against other men. If the life of such men really were secure, they have attained a natural good; if, however, it is insecure, they have not attained the end which by nature's own prompting they originally sought. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...38402876208674/>

**PD 8 - No pleasure is in itself bad, but the things which produce certain pleasures entail annoyances many times greater than the pleasures themselves. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...38868216162140/>

**PD 10 - If the objects which are productive of pleasures to profligate persons really freed them from fears of the mind—the fears, I mean, inspired by celestial and atmospheric phenomena, the fear of death, the fear of pain—if, further, they taught them to limit their desires, we should not have any reason to censure such persons, for they would then be filled with pleasure to overflowing on all sides and would be exempt from all pain, whether of body or mind, that is, from all evil. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...39817249400570/>

**PD9 - If every pleasure were condensed and were present at the same time and in the whole of one's nature or its primary parts, then the pleasures would never differ from one another. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...39550452760583/> **I want to particularly highlight this one on PD9 because it contains some excellent discussion on the nature of pleasure.

** Our other major graphics designer, Elli P., also produced several graphics on important Epicurean points:

** VS21 - "We must not force Nature but persuade her. We shall persuade her if we satisfy the necessary desires and also those bodily desires that do not harm us while sternly checking those that are harmful." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...40037286045233/>

**VS 78. "The noble man is chiefly concerned with wisdom and friendship; of these, the former is a mortal good, the latter an immortal one." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...40395846009377/>

**Elli also shared a link from her Greek page illustrating some confusion between Stoic and Epicurean ideas: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...38760869506208/>

Also as usual, Hiram C. posted a series of original articles:

**On Epicurean virtue: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...837780169604278>

**Reasonings on Community: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...39823886066573/>

**Contemplations on Tao Series - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...40060196042942/>

**An excellent post about Lucian's "science-fiction" adventure essay, cutely entitled "The True Story" - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...40151482700480/>

**Other posts of note this week include:

** One by me on a graphic about a "balanced life" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...36555979726697/>

** A post by me about conflicting translations (including VS42) and the need to scrutinize them for accuracy. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...37134736335488/> And a related post about conflicting translations on marriage, here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...37808186268143/>

** A post by me to a graphic posted by a friend that gave a good opportunity to discuss the nature of pleasure. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...37771686271793/>

**A post by me citing a comment by Gassendi on the Epicurean view of pleasure: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...38466879535607/>

**A post to a new file upload brought to my attention by Francisco Martinez - a great article on iconography associated with Lucretius - lots of good images / etchings here - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...38838269498468/>

**A post by Yiannis T. to a new website containing many ancient Greek texts: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...39205516128410/>

**Related to Yiannis' post, a clip from that same website about the meaning of "canon."
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...39242846124677/>

**A post by Alexander R. about the future of cyborgenic organisms.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...39322082783420/>

**A post by Dragan N. with a quote from an unusual source with Epicurean overtones.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...39578309424464/>

**And mentioning Dragan reminds me that his post from last week "Why Men Won't Marry You" remains a hot topic <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...35121579870137/>

**A post by Elli on a three year old boy with a very active imagination.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...39664222749206/>

And that's it for this week!

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Live Well!

Cassius Amicus

**Note: Here is a list of several options for those who wish to discuss Epicurus on the internet:

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Post by "Cassius" of June 20, 2015 at 10:42 PM

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 06/20/2015

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**Here are a few highlights from the week:

**Hiram and Panagiotis continued their series of memes for the 40 Doctrines, with this one on [PD15](https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...44868102228818/) as to the limits of natural wealth.

**Hiram posted on "Epicureanism as a Religious Identity" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...45023762213252/>

**Hiram posted on the "fullness of pleasure" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...45208155528146/>

**Hiram posted on "The Epicurean Nag Hammadi" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...45606728821622/>

**Alexander posted a link to an article comparing the pleasures of sex and alcohol to the pleasures of religion and having children. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...45323132183315/>

**Hiram posted a reminder of the resources we have posted in our files section:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...45412735507688/>

**Hiram and Panagiotis posted a meme on [PD16](#) and the role of reason:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...45730348809260/>

**Hiram posted an interesting question on a passage from Cosma Raimondi on the "intention" of Nature: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...45726942142934/>

**Elli posted an announcement that a third edition of "Epicurean Principal Doctrines - The Art of Wellbeing" by Christos Yapijakis was being issued - regrettably only in Greek -
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...46012812114347/>

**Hiram and Panagiotis posted a meme on [PD16](#) -
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...44269815621980/>

**Panagiotis posted a link to a Master's Thesis entitled "Epicurean Mission and Membership from the Early Garden to the Late-Roman Republic." I only had a chance to read part, but it appears excellent. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...46460398736255/>

**Alexander posted a link to a new article on particle physics.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...46530102062618/>

**Alexander also posted a link to an article on "Machine dreaming", linking it to the letter to Herodotus - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...46538952061733/>

**Hiram reminded us that "A Partially Examined Life" will be discussing "A Few Days In Athens" this Sunday <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...46544115394550/>

**Hiram posted "Reasonings On Community"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...46409045408057/>

**Domagoj posted a link to an article by Jaakko Wallenius, who until his death was an active internet poster on Epicurean ideas.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...46092652106363/>

**Today was the 20th and I posted a memorial:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...46816235367338/>

**I also posted today a meme on Jefferson's statement of the calculation of pleasure
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...47052288677066/>

**Last for the week as of this writing, I posted a blog entry on how a passage from Seneca illustrates the meaning of PD3. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...47094572006171/>

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Post by “Cassius” of June 27, 2015 at 8:42 PM

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**I am posting this Saturday night, as at this very moment things are reaching a crisis stage with the financial system in Greece. The topic is being discussed here <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...49919888390306/> and I hope our friends in Greece will keep us posted on developments in the coming days. Greece is the home of the most active group of Epicurean students anywhere in the world, and we certainly hope that they remain safe and sound as the crisis deepens.

**In other posts this week -

**Mark C. is a talented musician, and this week he posted a rough cut of a song he composed with on the theme of "[death is nothing to us](#)." It would be great to see Mark continue to work on this and develop other tunes with Epicurean themes. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...47431418639153/>

**Carlos V. posted a link to an article about "Classics for the People - Why We Should All learn from the ancient Greeks" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...47473258634969/>

**Hiram posted a link to a video by PhilosophyIO, which Hiram indicates has been discussing Epicurus recently. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...48325318549763/> Once again you'll find there the standard confusing discussion of how "static" pleasures are to be preferred *over* "moving" pleasures. Sigh. You can see the speaker choke on trying to describe that at the 2:30 point, if you like.... "Nothing is really going on, but it's just really enjoyable." Don't be surprised if you find his explanation unimpressive.

**There was some significant followup conversation this week about Seneca's comments on "natural and necessary" desires. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...48288508553444/>

**Here as a commentary post on the tetrapharmakon - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...48994428482852/>

**Hiram posted a link to an article he wrote on "against the common good." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...49593331756295/>

**I posted a link to an excellent video about a reconstruction of a Roman town in Portugal.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...49540255094936/>

**This post discusses Vatican saying 14 and points out some improvements that could be made in the standard translations. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...49918281723800/>

**And then today, I posted a video of a bear jumping into a swimming pool and used it to highlight several important issues in discussing pleasure.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...50038705045091/>

**To end where we began, a lot is going on in Greece this week, and many of our Greek friends are focused on some issues of critical importance to their future. Hopefully we'll receive updates as the crisis unfolds, and we wish our friends in the homeland of Epicurus well as they go through this difficult time.

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Post by “Cassius” of July 18, 2015 at 8:43 PM

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 07/4/2015

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**In followup to last week, events in the homeland of Epicurus are heating up fast. Tomorrow is the referendum that regardless of outcome appears to have important implications for the future of Greece. Posts on this topic include:

Elli transcribed into English and uploaded a complete copy of an article by George Kaplanis entitled “The Crisis And Epicurean Logic”
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...51735744875387/>

Posts on the referendum itself:<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...49919888390306/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...51606884888273/>

Elli's post on commentary by a UN Human Rights expert:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...51749811540647/>

Elli's post on a cite to Nietzsche:<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...51152371600391/>
My post relating a passage from Lucretius on difficult times:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...52247128157582/>

My post on “no fate but what we make for ourselves”
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...52578868124408/>

Elli's post on PD39<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...53062798076015/>

Other significant posts this week include:

Hiram's post on "a ship is safe in harbor"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...50890291626599/>

Hiram's post on Paul as the great corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...50890291626599/>

** My post on a thread at the Epicurus page interpreting Epicurus with stoic overtones (the comments, that is)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...50834738298821/>

My post on coming up with a better version of VS14 which doesn't refer to "leisure" (a word that does not appear in the text).
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...49918281723800/>

** Hiram's "How Religion is bad for ataraxia"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...51802331535395/>

**Hiram's post on the Uberization of the economy.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...51842461531382/>

**Alexander's link to an article on "fear and pleasure."
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...52492028133092/>

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*Jakob AE. posted a copy of a thesis he wrote on hedonism:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...52685454780416/>

**I posted on the relative scarcity of modern interest in the Epicurean commentary on politics/justice, even though these consume almost 25% of the space in the [Principal Doctrines](#).
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...52683688113926/>

**Elli's graphic on [PD39](#)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...53062798076015/>

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Post by “Cassius” of July 18, 2015 at 8:45 PM

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** The attention of Greece and its friends around the world continues to center on the financial crisis. Before linking to our major posts on that subject, this is a good time to remember that while Epicurean philosophy provides the essential basis for analyzing questions like this properly, it does not at all guarantee that each of us will reach the same answers. In the civil war that tore apart the Roman Republic, Caesar’s father-in-law, and perhaps Caesar himself, were identified as holding at least some Epicurean views, while Cassius Longinus, one of the

prime leaders of the rebellion, was also Epicurean. Any review of the last ten [principal doctrines](#) of Epicurus reveals that it is a bedrock principal that there is no “absolute justice,” and that “justice” is going to differ with time and place and people involved. That’s because there *is* no absolute standard of “right” and “wrong” that applies everywhere and at all times. Each person is born with life, “free will,” and the faculty of pleasure and pain, and it is only by this faculty of pleasure that anyone knows that which is truly desirable for him.

Epicurus said, “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.” This means that “the good” does not exist in a divine dictate from the gods; nor does it exist in some ideal platonic form in another dimension. “The good” for each of us is what our own faculty of pleasure tells us is pleasing to us in our own experience. Individual experiences are going to differ dramatically, and it is to be expected that different people will pursue their own desires in different ways.

So in my view, it is not possible to say that a devoted Epicurean would want to agree with the Troika and preserve the existing Greek status in the European Union, any more than it is possible to say that a devoted Epicurean would wish to exit the Euro, start printing drachmas, and follow a totally new course. Each of us have our views on which course would be best. But here is where I think it IS possible to say something about an Epicurean viewpoint, and how the Epicurean would be distinguished from other viewpoints.

It is core Epicurean doctrine that Gods do not interfere with our lives, and death is nothingness to us. That means that THIS life is all we have; that we are not going to heaven or hell after death, and that if we are going to experience any joy and delight it is going to be in THIS lifetime. And thus we must live our lives to the fullest possible to us – as we have no other. We must “seize the day.”

In contrast to this, a fascinating article was posted this past week entitled “Putting the Greek Back in Stoicism.” It was linked and discussed in our group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...52929258089369/> Reading the article is extremely enlightening for what it suggests the Greeks should do in this time of crisis. If you’ve ever wanted an example of the “stick-your-head-in-the-sand” attitude at the bottom of Stoicism, this is a good article to see it. It makes a couple of platitudinous points which are worth pointing out, with comment:

- Focus on things you can control – get over things that you cannot control <<< “Get over them” means what? forget about them? Epicurus advises study of all issues, including death and the gods.
- Bear in mind that things could have been worse << Nothing I can find about thinking about things being worse... Instead, the focus is on action to create a better life: “[PD16](#). Chance seldom interferes with the wise man; his greatest and highest interests have been, are, and will be, directed by reason throughout his whole life.”

• Learn self-control through occasional acts of self-denial. << And this one again confuses a tool “selfcontrol” with the end – pleasure. Learning self control for the sake of self control leads in a circle to nothing. And in the meantime, the supposed wisdom of the men cited in the article is NOT leading toward happiness in any ordinarily understandable version of that term as related to pleasurable living. Instead, if you listen to them, the goal is as far from pleasure as one could hope to find.

Even when sanitized in modern jargon, the poison is still there – buried just beneath the surface. Instead of “study nature and learn to live pleasantly” the emphasis is on “close your eyes and you’re one step closer to complete anesthesia.”

A similar list posted in another link can be used to illustrate the same point. In a video entitled “The Secrets of Happiness” we see “happiness” as defined by someone who is focusing on the absence of pain, rather than the pursuit of pleasure. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...55227731192855/>

I summarized these, again with comment, in the following list:

- 1) “Stop being so hopeful – expect that most things are going to go wrong.” No. Focus on pleasant living as your goal, act intelligently and rationally to deal with your circumstances and attain the pleasure that is possible and that can be gained without excessive pain, and in ****most**** cases (not all) you have reasonable grounds for confidence of success.
- 2) “Stop ranting about how awful other people are – most annoying people aren’t evil, they’re just anxious or sad.” Another prescription for disaster. Look at people realistically, and see whether in fact they are “having a bad day” or they belong to ISIS.
- 3) “Think of death a lot. Keep a skull on your desk.” Ridiculous,. There is no point in being morbid. Think of death AS appropriate – which is when you need to remember that life is short, that your time is important, and that the time you waste spouting platitudes like this list is gone forever..
- 4) “Laugh at yourself – think of yourself as a loveable fool.” See response to item 3. Laughing is appropriate, but taking your life unseriously is not. it’s the only one you have.
- 5) “Talk to yourself – ask yourself what you really want.” This one is arguably decent but if you work to ground yourself in a firm philosophy like Epicurus advised, it won’t be so necessary to reinvent the wheel every time something even a little bad happens.
- 6) “Stop trying to make yourself happy. It’s impossible. Make others happy.” Pure Stoicism. Happiness isn’t important, and the implication is that it is bad to pursue it.
- 7) “Look at yourself from outer space. From this height all your problems are small.” In other words, look at yourself from the perspective of a non-existent god or a non-existent Platonist philosopher king. You, and your problems, are nothing in the “great scheme of things.” The trouble is, as Epicurus pointed out, there IS no “great scheme” of things. Your life is all you have, and if you don’t deal with your problems intelligently, and not by minimizing them, you lose the only life you have.



“Throw your phone off a cliff.” Another veiled suggested to drop out, tune out, and turn off. And why not, when you have an eternity in heaven after you’re dead? Or, from the perspective of this video, you’re a worm anyway that is of total insignificance, so who cares what you learn

on the phone.

9) "Give up the idea that you should be normal. Everyone one is weird, and that's totally ok." In other words, it's totally Ok if your neighbor joins ISIS.

These are the Secrets of HAPPINESS? Not for a minute. They are the secrets of manipulating others into thinking you are praising happiness while you are in truth preaching asceticism, austerity, self-denial, pain, and the renunciation of every bit of pleasure that life calls you to pursue.

So to return to the theme of this introduction, I think it is entirely possible for someone of Epicurean disposition to look at his or her situation within Greece and reach entirely different conclusions as to what direction will lead to maximum net pleasure for them. But whichever choices an Epicurean makes, he or she should pursue them with vigor and every weapon of intellect available, because life is short, the night is long, and for all the rest of eternity we experience nothing. As Horace said, we must "seize the day."

**In other posts this week:

** Hiram posted to "Meditation changes your brain for the better" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...53925201323108/> and "depression makes your brain smaller" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...53925681323060/>

** Hiram also posted "Cosma Raimondi - The Rebirth of Epicurean Fervor" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...53925681323060/> And speaking of Cosma Raimondi, I posted on him as well: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...54324044616557/>

** The Society of Epicurus posted an interesting link on "Are you sure you're an epicure?" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...54297894619172/>

** I posted an article entitled "The Real Troika" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...54403071275321/>

** Hiram posted "Cultivating the Mind of An Epicurus" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...55137464535215/>

** Hiram posted another "welcome new members" thread, which we encourage all new members to participate in: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...55571464491815/>

** Our latest discussions on the Greek crisis took place mostly here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...55149411200687/>

**Hiram posted to an interesting article on "Proposing an Objective Morality" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...56141804434781/>

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Post by "Cassius" of July 18, 2015 at 8:46 PM

*THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 07/18/2015***

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** Summers have a tendency to be slower times for philosophy discussions, as Epicureans fill the warmer months with the activities of pleasant living, rather than dreaming up abstractions

to change the world. Nevertheless this week we had several interesting threads, including:

**A discussion of the excerpt from Diogenes Laertius that emotion is no hindrance to wisdom.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...56496011066027/>

**Hiram's post on Vatican Saying 28:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...56908897691405/>

**Hiram's setting up of an Epicurean Discussion at [Disqus.com](https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...57032424345719/):
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...57032424345719/>

**Hiram's post on "An Epicurean Case for Pastafari"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...57763510939277/>

**My post on warning against taking superficially a saying of Marcus Aurelius:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...56880601027568/>

**Hiram's link to an article on "The self-deception of the intentionally childless."
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...57820014266960/>

**Brent Rivera linked to "The Importance of Eating Together" which Epicurus surely would have endorsed:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...56491324399829/>

**Elli created a new graphic on [PD32](#) and the nature of justice:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...57952624253699/>

**Hiram linked to "Philosophy Core Concepts - Epicurus on Mental and Bodily Pleasures"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...58728097509485/>

**And then, in our most-commented post of the week, the we discussed how to view the news about the ISIS child decapitating the Syrian soldier from an Epicurean perspective:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...58665174182444/>

**Then, just before press time, Hiram posted a link to "The Science Behind Eternal Consciousness" which Ilkka handled with a swift reference to Victor Stenger.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...59041297478165/>

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Post by “Cassius” of July 25, 2015 at 11:50 PM

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 07/25/2015

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** The summer continues to be a little slow, but we had a number of good discussions (see below) even as events in Greece reduced in intensity from a boil to a simmer. Here are the

highlights of the past week:

**Samej D. linked to "Naturalistic Traditions: Were Epicurus and the Atomists Naturalistic?"

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...59221737460121/>

**Hiram posted to an article that needed deconstructing entitled "We Never Really Die...."

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...59041297478165/>

**This past week contained the Twentieth of July, and commemorations were posted by me (

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...59886300726998/>) and one of our most reliable

long-term observers of the Twentieth: Steve K.:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...60295227352772/> Steve K's gets the award for

widest interest, as his graphic of seasoned french fries was accompanied by the title "Sex-
pectations: The Problem With Having Sex...."

**Also on the Twentieth, I linked to an article with some sligh (or unintentional humor) about

Greeks trusting banks. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...59930244055937/>

**Elli reminded us of an older post on the difference between Stoicism and Epicurean

philosophy. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...60515347330760/>

**Samej D. linked to a video that in the end had a good message I think Epicurus would have

endorsed: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...61297047252590/>

**Yiannis T. linked to an article on Alan Watts and Acceptance of Death.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...61470477235247/>

**Elli posted new graphics with a cite to Lucretius Book 1:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...61811883867773/>

**Winning the "most commented post of the week" award was Elli in her post about Angela

Merkel and religion: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...60723947309900/>

**And topping off the week was a graphic of Epicurus superimposed on a Greek flag, with
commentary we'll need a translator to understand.

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Post by “Cassius” of August 1, 2015 at 8:23 PM

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 08/01/2015

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** After several slow weeks in July we've had a burst of activity to start August. And credit for the most-commented post of the week (perhaps the full year!) goes to Cecil the lion and Elli: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...63686343680327/> This post of course covered the killing of Cecil the lion, but also covered a wide range of issues. Closely related to that post was this one, also by Elli, on another "big game" hunter: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...64879300227698/> And also related was "The Hidden History of Greco-Roman Vegetarianism": <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...64171380298490/>

** In other posts:

** My "Action As A Requirement of Pleasure" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...62580217124273/>

**In another animal post, Alexander R. on dolphins: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...62814547100840/>

**Elli prepared a new graphic to mark the discovery of an earth-like planet in another galaxy: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...62814870434141/>

**Douglas M.da.S. asked about "An Archaeology of Ataraxia" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...63011853747776/>

**Elli posted an excellent essay on Christianity by Emma Goldman: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...62591103789851/>

**Elli prepared a new graphic on a comment by Nietzsche about Epicurus: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...63303370385291/>

**Hiram linked to a video about Epicurus on Friendship: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...63713037010991/>

**Domagoj started a thread on Epicurean political thought: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...62838913765070/>

**Hiram linked to an article on "meaning" as healthier than "happiness" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...63468200368808/>

**Elli created an excellent graphic based on a passage from Lucian on the importance of clear thinking. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...64038543645107/>

**Richard A started a thread on Buddha, Epicurus, and Lao Tse: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...64521853596776/>

**I started an article on "Purging Yourself of Stoicism" based on an article Domagoj sent my way: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...64925646889730/>

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Post by “Cassius” of August 8, 2015 at 9:44 PM

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 08/08/2015*

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** We've just finished another full week with many excellent posts. Before I dive into them, let me remind everyone that there is a good reason why posts in our Epicurean Philosophy Group forum frequently contain, and generate, heated commentary. The orthodox mainstream viewpoint is that Epicurus fits neatly into a consensus in which general attitudes such as "knowing oneself" and "moderation" and "happiness" are the best that Greek philosophy has to offer. Epicurus is held to be just another in a line from Socrates to Plato to Aristotle and through the Stoics who held heated debates on details, but rarely strayed from these same fundamentals.

Read about him in any generalist article on the internet, and you will find Epicurus portrayed as a teach of asceticism in the Stoic mold, whose main contribution was to apply an unusual definition of "pleasure" to mean nothing more than "absence of pain." This view reduces Epicurus to an unimportant footnote who deserves nothing more than a mild appreciation for his ability to turn a phrase, such as "[death is nothing to us](#)." And we are to understand that this phrase is a neat contribution because, to be perfectly blunt, "EVERYTHING" is really "nothing" to us. And that's because ****all**** moderns and ancient Greeks agree that by employing "reason" we can rise about the pain of ordinary life and aspire to a higher world of nobility through thought alone.

The regular posters in this group know that these generalities are far off base, and they have taken it upon themselves to understand how these distortions arose and respond with a more authentic interpretation of Epicurus. Many (but not all) of us have come to this viewpoint through studying the work of Norman DeWitt. DeWitt, who is all but written out of school by the society of modern commentators, provided a radically different interpretation through his "Epicurus and His Philosophy." Since its publication in the late 1950's, DeWitt's book has provided new generations of students of Epicurus the sort of guide to understanding Epicurean philosophy which has not existed in readily-available form since the ancient world.

For those of us who have followed DeWitt's lead and begun to see how Epicurus differs from the ancient and modern consensus, it is not sufficient to smile and nod and link to the babbling of

pop psychologists about "happiness" and "pleasure" who fail to provide clear definitions of those terms. Our arguments are often aimed against ancient and modern Stoics, because the Stoics were the first to attack Epicurus and systematize the arguments against "pleasure." But casual readers should understand that "Stoicism" is best understood as a general umbrella term with several common characteristics. It is a common attitude that has always existed, from the ancient world to today, and it is the very opposite of the Epicurean viewpoint.

When we refer to "Stoicism," what we are really referring to is any attitude that holds the following:

- that pleasure is the enemy of good living;
- that empty words like "virtue" can be the goal of life without further need for definition;
- that "fate" governs everything in the lives of men, to which the best response we can give is to seek to mentally deny the reality of pain;
- that the universe is governed by a supernatural overlord, call it gods or "divine fire" which is the source of all meaning in the universe.

It is *helpful*, but not necessary, to identify that these ideas have their roots in Ancient Stoicism. But it is *necessary* to identify, as Epicurus did, that these ideas are the mortal enemy of living in accord with the path Nature has set for all living things: the pursuit of mental and bodily pleasure.

The world is full of enemies of the Epicurean view of life, and we cannot hope to succeed in living the full pleasurable life that is possible to us unless we identify these enemies and gird ourselves against their attacks. Just as the fear of gods and the fear of death have plagued humanity throughout the ages, the "fear" of pleasure and of pain, and the consequences that occur when they are handled unintelligently, are tremendous obstacles to living the best life that is possible to us. All of these fears must be confronted and overcome.

The theme which unites the regular posters who defend Epicurus in this group is their devotion to living according to Nature. What they see in Epicurus was a pathbreaking leader who blazed the trail we are now following, and who deserves credit, respect, and thanks for his work. In addition to appreciating Epicurus, and for the same reasons, I appreciate the efforts of everyone here who work to present and defend the fundamentals of Epicurean philosophy. We all profit from the work going on here, and I urge new readers to join us in the fight to rediscover the truth about Epicurean philosophy.

Now for news from the week:

Hiram posted on "Stages of Development in Hedonist Spirituality"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...65457326836562/>

**In the first of series of excellent graphics this week, Elli posted a graphic analogizing Epicurean and Stoic "vases." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...65924240123204/>

**Elli also posted on the Epicurean attitude toward "isms" and political ideology. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...65260430189585/>

**Elli posted on Epicurus' commentary on sexual relations. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...66642740051354/>

**Elli posted on Metrodorus' saying about going to death "crying aloud in a glorious triumph song that we have lived well" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...66776746704620/>

**Elli posted on an excerpt from Dimitris Liantinis book "Ta Hellinika" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...66903776691917/>

**Hiram started a thread welcoming new members. We urge all new members to say hello and identify themselves: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...65360206846274/>

**Elli posted on the amusing story of Thesmopolis the Stoic <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67305559985072/>

**Elli posted on Epicurean Self-Sufficiency as discussed by Dr. Christos Yapijakis <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67301166652178/>

**Elli posted a graphic contrasting Zeno and Epicurus on the issue of fate: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...66797926702502/>

**Alexander R. posted on scientific findings about horses and their facial expressions <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67499989965629/>

**Elli posted on a possible bust of Idomeneus of Lampsacus <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67729483276013/>

**Elli posted an excerpt from Carl Sagan on the Ionian school (of which Epicurus was a part) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67722993276662/>

**Elli posted an illustrative story on friendship. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67551743293787/>

**Elli posted a graphic on Metrodorus' saying about only being born once. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...68079576574337/>

**Elli posted on the "babbling" comment recorded in the Bible as stated by Epicureans (and stoics) against "St Paul". <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...68238639891764/>

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Post by “Cassius” of August 15, 2015 at 7:37 PM

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** Here are the highlights of this week's posts:

** Much conversation continued on posts from earlier weeks that revolved around issues of religion, and I posted a refresher on Lucian's "Alexander the Oracle-Monger" to remind us of the Epicurean examples of how to deal with the topic:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...68980213150940/>

** In a similar vein, the issue arose of whether epistemology comes before physics, or vice versa, and we discussed how the Epicureans treated the topics together:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...69402559775372/>

**Thanks to Michael H. for posting a link to the Archeology Magazine article on Diogenes of Oinoanda. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...70396506342644/>

**We also had a post on the topic of religion vs philosophy and how "reason" may not adequately convey the proper alternative to religion.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...70788312970130/>

**Ellip P posted what turned out to be the longest discussion of the week, on how a researcher theorizes that the fall of the Roman Empire can be attributed to biology.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...68495483199413/>

**Elli P also posted links to what may be a new source for a statue of Epicurus - this one in a standing pose. She has promised to keep us up to date on this new source.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...70925316289763/>

**Hiram posted a link to a "Patheos.com" article on the influence of Randian ideas on society.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...71307882918173/>

**And most recently as I posted this is a new blog entry at NewEpicurean.com which compares the faculty of pleasure to the nature of money.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...71607402888221/>

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Post by “Cassius” of August 22, 2015 at 8:19 PM

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 08/22/2015

** This is the one hundred and twentieth in a series of weekly reports on news from the world of Epicurean Philosophy. Our home base for discussion is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy> Copies of these posts, and links to active Epicurean websites, are stored at EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com, and other discussion

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** Here are the highlights of this week's posts:

**New rumblings of political and economic changes began to be heard around the world last week, as the summer begins to draw to a close, and posting this past week was light. Before we check the highlights, this is a good time to remember that no matter what happens in the world at large, there are eternal issues of truth and untruth that lay just beneath the surface in almost every issue, so it never pays to get so distracted by current events that we forget the philosophical underpinnings.

** To start off the week, Hiram posted a link to discussion of his "Religion As Play blog post: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...72069022842059/>

** Thanks to Domagoj for finding an article about how the "lorem ipsum" dummy text used by typographers derives from the Epicurean portion of Cicero's "On Ends." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...74265649289063/>

**This past week included the Twentieth of the month, and both I and Steve K. posted on the topic. My post was about the question of whether "virtue is its own reward." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...74634485918846/>

** Steve K's post was to a well written article "Why Epicurus Matters Today" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...74460055936289/>

** Last for the week was my post on "Things That Never Change, and Things That Do" highlighting the twelve fundamental principles of physics that Epicurus held to be the foundation of his philosophy. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...75110749204553/>

** That's it for the weekly update - a short update for a short week. This can be expected to pick up as the season changes, so please be sure to post your comments, questions, and links as they occur to you.

**Thanks to all who participated in the Facebook forum this week. As always, if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please add a comment or participate in the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy/> or hop around the internet world of Epicurean Philosophy by checking the links here: EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com

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Live Well!

Cassius Amicus

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4 - If you are not only focused primarily on Epicurus, but you wish to assist with a forum platform where pro-Epicurean activists can build for the future, check out <https://www.epicureanfriends.com/www.EpicureanFriends.com>. Work is starting on a FAQ and other resources. Anyone can read the posts, but only approved members can create new posts or comment.

Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2015 at 8:03 PM

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 08/29/2015

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** Here are the highlights of this week's posts:

**On Aug 22, Michael C asked: "Must every position held by Epicurus originally stay the same today?" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...75750249140603/> That prompted quite a lot of discussion, and on Aug 23 I started a new thread entitled "Must I believe XXX that Epicurus Said?" This is a regular topic of discussion and anyone who has more comments is welcome to chime in: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...75949865787308/>

**On Aug 26, Takis P. posted a very pleasant "bon voyage" video from Greece: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...77193798996248/>

**On Aug 27, over at the Society of Friends of Epicurus, Hiram posted a link to where many of Nietzsche's books can be downloaded for free: <https://www.facebook.com/SocietyOfFrien...893735570709899> While Nietzsche's philosophy must be handled carefully, Nietzsche was generally an admirer of Epicurus, and he had important things to say about many areas of interest to student of Epicurus, especially in his analysis of stoicism.

**On Aug 28, I posted "Is the Fountain of Pleasure Tainted? Or Is The Taint In How We Approach It?" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...78102285572066/>

**On Aug 29, I posted "A Season Of The Year to Remember Fallen Epicureans": <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...78647568850871/>

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Post by "Cassius" of September 5, 2015 at 9:19 PM

****THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 09/05/2015****

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** Here are the highlights of this week's posts:

**On Aug 30, Alexander R. forwarded a link about "Robots Learning Like Humans" which served as the basis for a post on "All Dressed Up But No Place to Go" discussing the crucial role of pleasure and pain as Nature's stop and go signals. Robot inventors can instruct robots to consider some events as "pleasurable" and some events as "painful," but can the robots really "experience" pleasure and pain? The question serves as a great introduction to the pre-eminent role which Epicurus assigned to them in the Epicurean canon.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...78889212160040/>

** On August 31 I posted a link to an article in which the phrase "seeing is believing" is discussed by philosopher Leonard Peikoff. Peikoff's comments on this limited point seem largely sound despite his grounding in a non-Epicurean philosophy.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...79365322112429/>

** On Sep 30 I posted a copy of an article entitled "Paralysis In A Risk-Free Society" which contains interesting discussion of the issues involved in weighing pleasure vs. pain. Most choices to pursue any pleasure involve some amount of pain as the price of pursuing it, and it is an important question to consider the amount of "risk" we are willing to take in order to experience greater pleasure. When the price is clear, the calculus can be relatively clear, but what happens in those many situations when the full price of a pleasure is not clear, and may vary? <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...80252088690419/>

** It's been another relatively slow week, but things should pick up soon as we all begin to settle into the fall season (at least in the northern hemisphere). Keep in mind that the coming seven days includes September 11, a time of year particularly fraught with danger in some locales. Be Safe!

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Post by “Cassius” of September 12, 2015 at 10:03 PM

****THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 09/12/2015****

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**Today before jumping into the rest of the week's posts, I'd like to highlight the new outline of "Major Observations and Conclusions of Epicurean Philosophy" I just posted to the group. I hope this is useful to all, especially to the newcomers to the group who don't know a full list of the important principles and how they fit together. Feel free to comment in the thread if you have comments or suggestions on making the outline better.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...85738701475091/>

** Here are the highlights of this week's posts:

**On Sep 6, Elli posted an interesting video of a "catfight" and linked to my "Catus' Cat" poem.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...81782188537409/>

**Also on Sep 6, Hiram started a thread welcoming new members:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...81873705194924/>

**On Sep 7, Elli, posted a graphic with Vatican Saying 54 - that we must not pretend to study philosophy, but study it in reality, for it is not the appearance of health that we need, but real health. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...82303475151947/>

**On Sep 7, Uwe F. posted a link to an article on Epicurus in Italian.
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100006796486247>

**Also on Sep 7, Dragan posted a link to Aesop's fable of "the Flies and the Honey-Pot" which provided some good discussion. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...82303055151989/>

**On Sep 12, Hiram posted a link to an article on Philodemus.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...85361041512857/>

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Post by “Cassius” of September 19, 2015 at 8:49 PM

★★ THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 09/19/2015 ★★

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★★ Today I'd like to highlight a new post by Alexander R. in the group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...89980677717560/>) and explain why I think it's significant. The topic is essentially how we should consider whether and how concepts of "condensed - rarified" and "kinetic - static" apply to pleasure. Alexander's comments highlight the issue from the perspective that Alexander regularly posts on - physics issues, including the movement of particles.

Here's the point that I want to emphasize: Alexander has a keen interest in Epicurean theory in part because he is oriented toward the physics, and he knows that the implications of physics go far beyond "dry" science. Many of our participants come to our group knowing a little about Epicurus' ethics, but virtually nothing about Epicurus' "physics" or his theories of knowledge. If this situation describes you, you owe it to yourself to spend some time understanding why

Epicurus was concerned about these deeper issues. With just a little effort I think you'll begin to see why they are so important.

I think we all can recognize that the question "can we know anything?" is closely related to the ethics questions that most of us find interesting. After all, if we can't know anything with confidence, then how can we have any confidence in any decisions we make on how to live?

And how did Epicurus attack the question of how we know anything? He attacked it by looking for the *mechanism* by which we gather informations - the mechanism by which our senses operate. And the key to this mechanism is the topic of "images." As dry as that might sound, the essential point of "images" is nothing more than to address the point of how we learn things. The point is that GODS do not plant ideas in our minds, and neither are we born with ideas fully-formed in our minds. We don't learn things by looking for FORMS in heaven, as Plato taught, or for "essences" built into the objects around us, as Aristotle taught. Our job in learning isn't dependent on revelation from gods, nor is it dependent on "logic" after we somehow tune our minds with the essences around us. The job of learning is wrapped up in understanding how our senses operate - how "images" travel from objects to us, and how we interpret those images even when they are not clear.

The work of unravelling how these "images" work relies on our understanding the nature of the images and how they move, and that is a matter of "physics." In other words, we have to grasp a basic understanding of the concept of particles and how they move if we are to have any confidence that we can rely on this mechanism to gather knowledge. If those particles are at the mercy of gods, then WE are at the mercy of gods, and all hope of confidence in living without fear of the gods is essentially gone.

So Epicurus wants you to understand enough physics to see that our senses operate through the motion of particles. And he also wants you to know that not only your sight and hearing, but the entire universe as well, operates through the properties and the motion of those particles. That's why you need to know enough about particles to realize that they aren't "divine" and they are in fact "eternal" - that they therefore weren't created by any god.

And only if you know the basics of this issue will you have enough confidence to laugh at St. Paul, in Galatians 4:9, when he says: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"

From this you ought to begin to see that the "physics" of Epicurus was hardly "dry" at all. Unlike our modern particle physicists, who often seem to live in a world of their own, Epicurus considered a series of basic observations about the nature of the elements to be essential for anyone's understanding of how to live happily.

In order to make this review of basic principles of nature easier to grasp, I have continued to work this week on my latest "outline" which summarizes these issues and their implications.

The latest version will always be here: <http://newepicurean.com/major-observat...phy-an-outline/>

So if you're one of many who knows something about Epicurean ethics but little about the foundations of the Epicurean view of Nature or Knowledge, I hope you'll take a few minutes to review the first two bullet points on Nature and Knowledge, and these should help you to think about the connection of "physics" to the Epicurean conclusions on how to live.

★★ Moving on, here are the rest of the highlights of this week's posts:

★★ On Sep 15, Elli posted a cute video illustrating an Epicurean and Platonist at the Agora. 😊
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...87462297969398/>

★★ On Sep 16, I posted a link to a news article on a court ruling allowing the religious ceremony of "Kaparos" to continue in New York over the objections of animal rights advocates.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...88556217860006/>

★★ On Sep 17, Alexander linked to an article on how quantum theory may relate to human decisionmaking. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...88955844486710/>

★★ On Sep 15 I linked to my blog post announcing the "outline" as discussed above.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...87735334608761/>

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Post by “Cassius” of September 26, 2015 at 10:04 PM

Welcome to This Week in Epicurean Philosophy for September 26, 2015

ALL READERS PLEASE NOTE: This week we are upgrading to a new format. We will continue to post all updates to the Facebook groups and Twitter feed, but we are starting a new email subscription list for updates so you can receive copies of all newsletters (and at your option, each post at NewEpicurean.com) in your local email. To ensure proper delivery please subscribe (for free of course) by clicking [here](#). There will no doubt be some glitches as we adopt the new system so please feel free to report all comments and suggestions. We hope this new format will lend itself to greater substance and an increased "shareability" factor that will lead to continued growth of the worldwide Epicurean community.

THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 09/26/2015

- This is the one hundred and twenty-fifth in a series of weekly reports on news from the world of Epicurean Philosophy. Our home base for discussion is the [Facebook Epicurean Philosophy Group](#). Copies of these posts, and a current list of links to active Epicurean websites can be found at [EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com](#). For even more choices in discussing Epicurean philosophy, check the list of sites included at the end of this newsletter.

- At the [Facebook Epicurean Philosophy Group](#) we welcome all participants and lurkers. If you apply to participate (through the normal Facebook process) and don't receive a reply promptly, please send an email to an admin about your interest in the group. Our group is dedicated to the productive discussion of Epicurean Philosophy and its application to daily life, and in so doing we want to also, in the words of Lucian, "**strike a blow for Epicurus - that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams, who alone had and**

imparted true insight into the good, and who brought deliverance to all that consorted with him!"

- Along with our format change this week there will be additional changes to the weekly newsletter. We'll continue to point to the best of the posting going on in the Facebook group, and we'll also include links and commentary to items that might not have made it to a posting on the Facebook group. Hopefully these changes will make the newsletter more useful in spreading the word about the true philosophy of Epicurus.

- Here are the latest major posts at the [Facebook Group](#) this week:

- This past week contained the Twentieth of September, which (as Epicurean students know) was the date of the month which Epicurus requested that his students memorialize as a special date for the observation of Epicurean philosophy and recollection of the founders. As usual we had several special posts commemorating the date, including one from Steve K. [commenting on an Epicurus-related Existentialist comic](#) and my own post with [a summary of major points from the letter to Herodotus](#). Also on the 20th, Elli P. posted [a very interesting article on Asclepiades of Bithynia and his relationship to Hippocrates](#).

- On the 21st I posted a link to remind everyone of [the unashamed Epicurean connection to the common pig](#) (an extremely smart animal), as confirmed by several ancient references including the poet Horace.

- On the 21st I also posted a graphic listing a number of important [Epicurean quotations involving "time" and our attitude toward it](#).

- As an example of what I think is the high quality of our group's posting and research into Epicurus, we had two posts this week that produced an important find for those interested in getting Epicurean theory as accurately as possible. First I posted [on Cicero's attacks on Epicurus in On Ends](#), noting that we regularly cite the good comments and we need to be able to deal with the bad comments too. That post led directly to an important find, thanks to Pangiotis A. We have located and posted a copy of an important research work from 1938: Mary Porter Packer's "[Cicero's Presentation of Epicurean Ethics](#)." This is a well-documented and researched work which blows the lid off of the respect that many people accord to Cicero's interpretations of Epicurean ethics. Norman Dewitt mildly criticized the article for being too easy on Cicero's motives, but the conclusion that Cicero cannot be relied on at face value is of importance regardless of Cicero's motive. Here is how Packer summarized her own opinion: ""Cicero was himself a man of action whose personal standards and inclinations resulted in a life of high integrity and devotion to public service. A life of tranquil equilibrium, even if good and useful, would not have appealed to his nature. He was therefore temperamentally out of sympathy with the Epicurean ideal, and was confirmed in his attitude by the price which he had paid for his own devotion to public interests, and partly perhaps by contact with certain nominal Epicureans of his own day (see above pp. 64-65, 94-97, 115-116). It would seem that these influences worked in a circle, so that Cicero by his disinclination toward the ideals of Epicureanism is blinded toward much in the doctrine with which he must have agreed; and by his failure to realize much that he could have agreed with in theory, he is led to assume for the doctrine certain inconsistencies and vicious tendencies which were in no degree inherent in 'the

system. The respect which he admits for certain individual Epicureans, and even for certain tenets of their philosophy, might well have led him to re-examine his own conclusions concerning the system as a whole. In the light of the above study it is fair to say that Cicero's treatment of Epicurean ethics is an untrustworthy source from which to seek a fundamental understanding of the philosophy." This is a very important work that would be helpful to anyone interested in learning more about Epicurean ethics.

- On the 23rd Yiannis T. posted a link to [an article on David Hume](#), which has some very interesting commentary on Hume's views that are helpful in evaluating Epicurean ideas. Hume is often compared to Epicurus, but there are tremendously important differences of viewpoint as well, and this is a good article for bring out those differences and similarities.

- On the 24th Elli posted a link to [an interesting couch!](#) In a similar vein, Elli posted to an article on [something that doesn't sound like a good use of time](#).

- Earlier today (the 26th) Hiram posted a challenge to all of us to see if we can get [Google to honor Epicurus](#). Please check it out and see if you can help. Hiram also posted a link to an article [discussing Sam Harris' views on pleasure](#).

- **Here are the major recent posts at NewEpicurean.com:**

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Post by "Cassius" of October 3, 2015 at 9:23 PM

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This week we mark the death of Erik Anderson, founder of the Epicurus.info website:

Although the event happened in July, most of us have just learned about the death of Erik Anderson this past week, after a group member found [this obituary](#). Many of us, definitely including me, learned a lot about Epicurus from the material that Erik edited and collected at his websites Epicurus.info and the associated Epicurus.wiki. I never had the pleasure of knowing Erik myself except in a very few cordial emails, but this selection from his obituary classically describes the kind of upbeat, searching personality who is attracted to the study of Nature and to Epicurean ideas:

"From an early age, Erik was fascinated by the stars. (He built his first telescope at age 14.) He co-authored (with Charles Francis Ph.D.) a number of papers that appeared in academic journals, including the Royal Astronomical Society, most focused on their alternative theory of the motions of spiral galaxies. An article on his work appeared in the Ashland Tidings. He ran a successful business, astrostudio.org, from which he produced best-selling moon calendars and stellar images calendars. His book Vistas of Many Worlds featured Erik's beautiful computer-generated images. A past president of Southern Oregon Skywatchers, Erik could often be seen helping star-gazers to find the twin stars and the moons of Jupiter. Erik was an avid reader, mainly of classic philosophy, an enthusiastic hiker, and a formidable Trivia and Scrabble player. Most of all, he was a caring friend to many who will greatly miss him for his friendliness, his wit, his remarkable intelligence and his questing spirit."

Unfortunately the [obituary](#) is all I know about the circumstances of Erik's death, but we do know a little more about the aftermath. The main reason that most of us learned about Erik's death is that for the last few weeks Epicurus.info and the Epicurus wiki shortly thereafter have become unavailable. Several of us are working to see what can be done to change that, but in the meantime you may want to bookmark these links at the "Wayback Machine" on archive.org. For the present, you can find copies of [Epicurus.info here](#) and [the Epicurus wiki here](#).

One avenue that may open to get those sites back on line seems to be taking shape with another of the leading students of Epicurus on the internet, Peter St Andre. Peter is working to see if the sites can be brought back, and he would make a great curator of Erik's sites given his own expertise Epicurus. If you're not familiar with Peter's work, you might want to [check out his page](#).

The impact of Erik's death has taken on additional significance to me personally, as this weekend a close personal friend of many years passed away unexpectedly. Both these events

emphasize to me that it is among the most important insights of Epicurean philosophy that we must live while we live, and that life comes to an end all too quickly. Regardless of any other of the many factors that support Epicurean conclusions, we should consider it of the greatest urgency to live our lives fully while we can. To paraphrase Lucretius, divine pleasure is the guide **of the living**. Those who are now dead need no guides or anything else, because they have ceased to exist. Erik has left us a sterling example of someone who has lived fully by engaging life at the deepest philosophical level.

As we think about this event, we should remember [PD40](#): "As many as possess the power to procure complete immunity from their neighbours, these also live most pleasantly with one another, since they have the most certain pledge of security, and after they have enjoyed the fullest intimacy, **they do not lament the previous departure of a dead friend, as though he were to be pitied.**"

All of us will eventually meet the same end as Erik, so he is no more to be pitied than are we ourselves. Our goal should be as was recorded in VS. 47: "I have anticipated thee, Fortune, and entrenched myself against all thy secret attacks. And I will not give myself up as captive to thee or to any other circumstance; but **when it is time for me to go, spitting contempt on life and on those who vainly cling to it, I will leave life crying aloud a glorious triumph-song that I have lived well.**"

From the [Facebook Group](#) this week:

This past week Hiram has suggested a campaign to have Epicurus honored by Google with one of their "doodles." Considering the number of people who see that graphic the benefit would be immense, so please check [Hiram's suggestion here](#).

Also this week Ilkka posted a major new article on his [Menoceus blog](#). The article addresses an early blog post by a writer who wanted to discuss "[problems with Epicureanism and Naturalism](#)." Ilkka cuts through a lot of confusion in the earlier article - here's an example: The LavalSubjects author writes: "*Epicureanism teaches that by "good" we mean pleasure and "bad" we mean pain. In other words, pleasure, for the epicurean is the ethical principle.*" Of course this requires that the reader immediately understand that Epicurus clearly advised that sometimes we choose pain and avoid pleasure, and writers who are not versed in Epicurus have a very difficult time understanding that Epicurean advice to pure pleasure wisely does not elevate wisdom to a status that it can never hope to carry - that of being an abstraction higher than pleasure to which pleasure herself must bow. The writer assumes that there must be a "THE ethical principle" above all others, and only if you study Epicurus for yourself are you likely to understand that Epicurus calls you to separate from the crowd and reject that frame of reference. Ilkka does a very good job of unwinding these and other confusions in the original article. Be sure to check out Ilkka's article [for the full commentary](#).

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Post by "Cassius" of October 10, 2015 at 7:02 PM

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This week: more on how we console ourselves to the death of loved ones.

Last week we marked the death of Erik Anderson, founder of the Epicurus.info website, as recorded in his [obituary](#). This week, I am still caught up in thinking about how short life is, and how important it is for us to make the best use of the time that we have. As I also mentioned last week in discussing Erik's death, a very close friend of my own died last week. This past week has been spent meeting with his widow and hearing about my friend's final months struggling with a heart condition that should have been curable, and that has kept the issue of reconciling with death front and center in my mind.

There are many ancient Epicurean passages that deal with the loss of a loved one to death, but a longer passage that stands out was written in the 1800's by Frances Wright and given to Epicurus to say in chapter ten of [A Few Days In Athens](#) stands out. If you haven't yet read [A Few Days In Athens](#), I hope this extended quote will encourage you to take the plunge:

"But there is yet a pain, which the wisest and the best of men cannot escape; that all of us, my sons, have felt, or have to feel. Do not your hearts whisper it? Do you not tell me, that in death there is yet a sting? That ere he aim at us, he may level the beloved of our soul? The father, whose tender care hath reared our infant minds — the brother, whom the same breast hath nourished, and the same roof sheltered, with whom, side by side, we have grown like two plants by a river, sucking life from the same fountain and strength from the same sun — the child whose gay prattle delights our ears, or whose opening understanding fixes our hopes — the friend of our choice, with whom we have exchanged hearts, and shared all our pains and pleasures, whose eye hath reflected the tear of sympathy, whose hand hath smoothed the couch of sickness. Ah! my sons, here indeed is a pain — a pain that cuts into the soul. There are masters that will tell you otherwise; who will tell you that it is unworthy of a man to mourn even here. But such, my sons, speak not the truth of experience or philosophy, but the subtleties of sophistry and pride. He who feels not the loss, hath never felt the possession. He who knows not the grief, hath never known the joy. See the price of a friend in the duties we render him, and the sacrifices we make to him, and which, in making, we count not sacrifices, but pleasures. We sorrow for his sorrow; we supply his wants, or, if we cannot, we share them. We follow him to exile. We close ourselves in his prison; we soothe him in sickness; we strengthen him in death: nay, if it be possible, we throw down our life for his. Oh! What a treasure is that for which we do so much! And is it forbidden to us to mourn its loss? If it be, the power is not with us to obey.

Should we, then, to avoid the evil, forego the good? Shall we shut love from our hearts, that we may not feel the pain of his departure? No; happiness forbids it. Experience forbids it. Let him who hath laid on the pyre the dearest of his soul, who hath washed the urn with the bitterest tears of grief — let him say if his heart hath ever formed the wish that it had never shrined within it him whom he now deploras. Let him say if the pleasures of the sweet communion of his former days doth not still live in his remembrance. If he love not to recall the image of the departed, the tones of his voice, the words of his discourse, the deeds of his kindness, the amiable virtues of his life. If, while he weeps the loss of his friend, he smiles not to think that he once possessed him. He who knows not friendship, knows not the purest pleasure of earth. Yet if fate deprive us of it, though we grieve, we do not sink; Philosophy is still at hand, and she upholds us with fortitude. And think, my sons, perhaps in the very evil we dread, there is a good; perhaps the very uncertainty of the tenure gives it value in our eyes; perhaps all our pleasures take their zest from the known possibility of their interruption. What were the glories of the sun, if we knew not the gloom of darkness? What the refreshing breezes of morning and evening, if we felt not the fervors of noon? Should we value the lovely-flower, if it bloomed eternally; or the luscious fruit, if it hung always on the bough? Are not the smiles of the heavens more beautiful in contrast with their frowns, and the delights of the seasons more

grateful from their vicissitudes? Let us then be slow to blame nature, for perhaps in her apparent errors there is hidden a wisdom. Let us not quarrel with fate, for perhaps in our evils lie the seeds of our good. Were our body never subject to sickness, we might be insensible to the joy of health. Were our life eternal, our tranquillity might sink into inaction. Were our friendship not threatened with interruption, it might want much of its tenderness. This, then, my sons, is our duty, for this is our interest and our happiness; to seek our pleasures from the hands of the virtues, and for the pain which may befall us, to submit to it with patience, or bear up against it with fortitude. To walk, in short, through life innocently and tranquilly; and to look on death as its gentle termination, which it becomes us to meet with ready minds, neither regretting the past, nor anxious for the future."

From the Facebook Group this week:

This past week Hiram [posted a link to a great collection of Epicurean "memes"](#) and pamphlets which can be used to share information about Epicurus in graphic form. One of the materials listed there is a PDF of [Norman DeWitt's Philosophy for the Millions](#), an excellent introduction to the significance of Epicurus and his philosophy.

Uwe F. posted a link to [an interesting article on Lucretius' choice of style for persuasion](#).

Hiram also posted a link to an upcoming release by Michael Onfrey entitled ["A Hedonist Manifesto: The Power to Exist."](#) This is the English translation of a book that was published in French a number of years ago, and it's right on target with many issues of interest to the student of Epicurus. From the Amazon page: "Onfray attacks Platonic idealism and its manifestation in Judaic, Christian, and Islamic belief. He warns of the lure of attachment to the purportedly eternal, immutable truths of idealism, which detracts from the immediacy of the world and our bodily existence. Insisting that philosophy is a practice that operates in a real, material space, Onfray enlists Epicurus and Democritus to undermine idealist and theological metaphysics; Nietzsche, Bentham, and Mill to dismantle idealist ethics; and Palante and Bourdieu to collapse crypto-fascist neoliberalism. In their place, he constructs a positive, hedonistic ethics that enlarges on the work of the New Atheists to promote a joyful approach to our lives in this, our only, world."

Hiram also posted a link to [a very good video on Richard Dawkins](#) on how we should deal with assertions by religion which by nature cannot be proved. Dawkins emphasizes that relativism is not a sufficient response to religion, a point of view we often hear expressed as "everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts."

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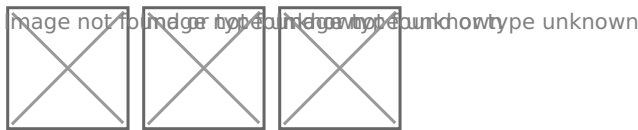
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Note Re: Epicurus.info and the Epicurus wiki.

Over the last two weeks we've mentioned the death of Erik Anderson, founder of the Epicurus.info website and the associated wiki, two of the most helpful Epicurean sites on the internet. As of this writing those sites are still offline, but they can be accessed at <https://web.archive.org/web/20141217100328/http://epicurus.info/> and https://web.archive.org/web/2014053015....info/Main_Page .

This Week: Applying Epicurus To Modern Problems.

Before we can apply Epicurus to our own lives, we first have to understand his advice, and that is not always as easy as it first appears. We all know that Epicurus considered pleasure to be the guide of life, but just as in any other philosophy (or in any religion) there are plenty of questions about how that should be done. We often run into situations where there are competing demands and priorities, and we need to know how to approach those situations where the evidence for what we should do is conflicting.

That's the reason for the recent post entitled "[The Epicurean Method of Analogy in Philodemus, and its Vital Importance to Us.](#)" Epicurus didn't just pick an unconventional goal of life at random, he claimed that the goal of life, and the method for living it properly, all derive from the nature of the universe. The atomistic view of the universe that Epicurus taught led him to stress that thinking itself is a function of the atoms, and must operate consistently with the elements if it is to be successful.

Thus by the time Herculaneum was destroyed and the Epicurean library was buried in the debris, Philodemus had produced a work highlighting the differences between Epicurean methods of thinking and those of other schools. The part of the work that survived has been translated by Phillip and Estelle De Lacy, and the result, with an excellent commentary, is easily accessible at the link featured in the article.

Only one small part of Philodemus' work is featured in [the recent blog post](#), and there is much more to be learned from Philodemus' argument. But the bottom line is that successful rational thinking is not reserved for the gods, or for the experts in syllogistic logic. It is essential for happy living that we have confidence in the results of our thinking, and that's exactly what we can achieve if base our thinking on the evidence nature gives to us, and not on the opinions of other men.

Also From the Facebook Group this week:

This past week at the Epicurean Philosophy Group contained a post on [the hypothetical content of modern ceremonies](#) for important life events based on Epicurean principles.

Also, in the most-discussed post of the week, Jason B. posted about [how modern psychological problems might be addressed using Epicurean principles](#).

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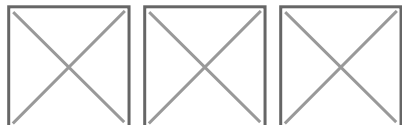
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Post by “Cassius” of October 24, 2015 at 10:22 PM

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The History of Remembering Epicurus on "the Twentieth"

This past week contained the twentieth of October, and one of our Facebook Group readers asked about the reasons for posting "Happy Twentieth. This is a question we receive often, so rather than simply list the link in this newsletter, let's cite the references, starting with the main one from the will of Epicurus:

"And from the revenues made over by me to Aynomachus and Timocrates let them to the best of their power in consultation with Hermarchus make separate provision for the funeral offerings to my father, mother, and brothers, and for the customary celebration of my birthday on the tenth day of Gamelion in each year, and for the meeting of all my School held every month on the twentieth day to commemorate Metrodorus and myself according to the rules now in force. Let them also join in celebrating the day in Poseideon which commemorates my

brothers, and likewise the day in Metageitnion which commemorates Polyaenus, as I have done previously."

Norman DeWitt described the history this way in *Epicurus and His Philosophy*, Chapter 2:

"At any rate, in the dispositions made long afterward in his will for the perpetuation of his own memory, the date was fixed, not for the anniversary day of his birth, which fell on the seventh, but at the twentieth, the day that marked the final initiations at Eleusis. The twentieth was also sacred to Apollo, which gave it an additional sanctity. Such notoriety eventually attached itself to these monthly memorial gatherings that Epicureans were dubbed "Twentyers" by way of derision."

Further, there is [record in the poetry of the Epicurean Philodemus](#) that documents the tradition:

Tomorrow, dearest Piso, your cultured companion drags you
To his humble shack at three o'clock
To feed you your annual dinner on the Twentieth. If you'll miss
Sow's udders and Bromius' Chian wine,
Still you'll see your faithful companions and hear
Things far more sweet than the Phaeacians' land.
And if you ever turn your gaze on us too, Piso,
We'll have a richer Twentieth, instead of a humble one.

In addition to the "happy twentieth" greetings you see in the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook group, [Hiram Crespo has written an excellent article](#) on how modern Epicureans might continue the tradition.

Also From the Facebook Group this week:

On 10/17 [Alexander R. linked to an article on decision-making and quantum theory.](#)

On 10/18, I posted about [Cicero's Tusculun Disputations](#), where Cicero had one of his character say a line to the effect that: "he would prefer to agree with Plato and be wrong than to agree with certain philosophers and be right." Norman DeWitt construes the philosophers referred to as Epicureans, but the line doesn't specifically refer to Epicurus, so the context has to be taken into account. The closest school referred to just before the particular reference is Pythagorean, but the context makes pretty clear that Plato was agreeing with the Pythagoreans that the soul survives death, so the Pythagoreans aren't the ones being contrasted to Plato. The entire thrust of passages before this, however, is an argument against those who assert that the soul perishes at death, so (and/or maybe Democritus) seems to be the leading candidate for that position.'

Also on 10/18, Victor H. linked to an interesting [article on the Hippocratic Oath.](#)

On 10/20 Steve K [posted about the "Epicurean Manifesto."](#)

Also on 10/20 we had [the complete exchange](#) with George M. about the Twentieth.


Hiram Crespo's "The Epicurean Revival" was posted about this time last year, and [relinked this past week in our group.](#)


And finally on 10/20, George M.'s post led to a post about [the "weak and beggarly elements."](#)


On 10/23 Uwe F. linked to an article on Lucretius and his persuasive abilities.


Rounding out the week, Ilkka V. posted a new article to the Menoecus blog, this one on [the important topic of definitions in philosophical discussions](#).


Recent significant posts at [NewEpicurean.com](#):

 [Peace and Safety For Your Twentieth of October – Tips on Epicurean Reasoning from Philodemus](#) Peace and Safety to the Epicureans of today, no matter where you might be! Every day, not just the Twentieth, is a good day to remember that Epicurean philosophy teaches a...

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 [Peace and Safety For Your Twentieth of September! – An Overview of the Letter to Herodotus](#) Peace and Safety to the Epicureans of today, no matter where you might be! This month for the Twentieth, I offer a quick outline of the major points of...

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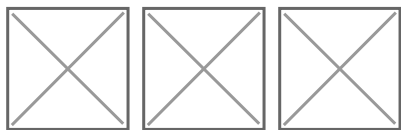
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Post by "Cassius" of October 31, 2015 at 11:03 PM

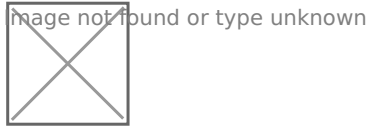
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Dawn of A New Age of Epicurus



If you follow the world of politics, the last ten days in the USA have provided an important reminder: where passions run high, truth is often the first casualty. If you are of a liberal political persuasion, you have been outraged by the treatment of Hillary Clinton by the Republican Congress. If you are of conservative persuasion, you have been outraged by hostile reporters at the Republican presidential debate.

No matter how badly you feel about the distortions and misrepresentations you have witnessed, stop for a moment and think. How would you feel about a similar campaign of deliberate distortion and misrepresentation that lasted, not ten days, but two thousand years? What if the target of those lies was not an ordinary politician, but the leading philosopher of Western Civilization, who had stood up heroically, and almost alone, against the forces of false religion and false philosophy which had kept the world before his time in darkness?

If you can imagine the anger you would feel, but if you also think that this obstacle would not intimidate you, but would spur you on to search out the truth with even more strength, then you are ready for the world of Epicurean philosophy.

Almost all that is truly known about the philosophy of Epicurus is contained in Book X of the "Lives and Opinions of the Philosophers" written by Diogenes Laertius in ancient Greece, in the poem "On the Nature of Things" written by Lucretius in ancient Rome, and in the fragmented inscription dug up from the wallstones erected by Diogenes of Oinoanda in ancient Asia Minor. None of these works are so lengthy, or so difficult, that you cannot master them for yourself. With **very** few exceptions, these sources are the only documents left to us by the men who understood Epicurean philosophy, who supported it, and who intended to convey it with accuracy and fairness.

But contrary to these reliable texts, a torrent of intentional misrepresentation and negligent error has been delivered for two thousand years. In every direction you look, whether in the ancient world by Cicero or Plutarch, or in the modern world by Wikipedia or the slickest websites, you will find commentary prepared by people who were (or are) avowed enemies of core Epicurean doctrines. These anti-Epicurean commentaries have had one purpose: to tear down, disrupt, and confuse those who would look to Epicurus for philosophic guidance.

But the world is changing. Modern technology is allowing the scattered few who sense the truth about Epicurus to communicate easily with one another. Modern technology is allowing those who wish to learn the truth for themselves to find and share the hidden gems of analysis that still exist, rediscovered through digital scanning, and recovered from centuries of dormancy on

the dusty shelves of libraries from around the world.

In recent years the NewEpicurean.com has had a small role to play in encouraging the rediscovery of Epicurus, but the work has hardly begun. With the help of modern technology and internet collaboration, we've only begun to reconstitute a body of work that accurately conveys the true teachings of Epicurus for themselves. In other corners of the internet, such as the Facebook Epicurean Philosophy Group and Facebook Epicurus Page, the Society of Epicurus, and the active Epicurean groups in Greece, other activists are advancing the work of bringing back true Epicurean doctrine and practices.

But these activists need your help.

The great majority of commentary which young people come across in their studies fails to convey the core insights of Epicurean philosophy. Traditional denunciations of Epicurus abound, and even those commentators who commend Epicurus do so for reasons of their own that Epicurus would find abhorrent. Modern students need access to the small number of sources and commentaries that present Epicurean ideas accurately, professionally, and persuasively. Such resources do exist, both in the ancient texts and with modern commentators such as Frances Wright and Norman DeWitt, but it will take time and effort to compile these materials and present them for modern use on the internet.

So here's the challenge: Please consider volunteering in our efforts. [Hiram Crespo](#) has put much work into the [Society of Epicurus](#), and we have active discussions going on daily on the [Epicurus Page](#) and the [Epicurean Philosophy Group](#) on Facebook. Let us know, either by private email or by public posting, how we can help you help us in advancing the message of Epicurean philosophy.


With your help, we can all profit from the study of Nature as guided by Epicurus, and with work and persistence, we can all be a part of the dawn of a new age of Epicurus.


Note: The photo above come with permission and our appreciation from Noel Daemen, located in Maastricht in The Netherlands, where he works with [Daemen3dprojecten.nl](#).

Also From the Facebook Group this week:

There were several excellent posts this week on the Facebook group, including those by Jason B. discussing [the meaning of the existence of life](#) and on [evolution to see things "as they really are"](#), and by Georges M. on [Lucretius](#).

Also, Christos Yapijakis, leader of the Garden of Epicurus group in Athens, Greece, penned a tribute to the recently deceased Erik Anderson, former proprietor of the Epicurus.info web page.

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Post by "Cassius" of November 7, 2015 at 9:08 PM

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The Proper Starting Point

Recently in another philosophy forum I observed a debate over the best place to start in organizing one's outlook on life. The poster was an experienced reader in philosophy and knew the official drill - that ethics is secondary to metaphysics (the nature of the universe) and to epistemology (the science of how we have confidence in what we claim to know). Nevertheless, the poster wanted to challenge that sequence and assert that it is naive to give priority to metaphysics and epistemology, because as a matter of indisputable fact the great majority of

people first decide what they **wish** to be true in ethics - generally because they "feel" their position to be right.

Having selected their preferred ethical positions, such people simply shop around for whatever metaphysical or epistemological viewpoints seem to strike their fancy at the moment, flipping often from one viewpoint to another. As a result, these people tend to conclude that metaphysics and epistemology are of less importance, and the very names of these branches of philosophy fade into the background of their minds.

It takes only a brief study to see how dramatically Epicurus disagreed with this majority viewpoint. Whether one chooses to read the letters of Epicurus, the poem of Lucretius, or the inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda, the conclusion is inescapable. The Epicurean thought process focused did not start with ethics, but started first on studying the nature of the universe, checked immediately by studying the question of how it is our observations about the universe can be deemed to be reliable.

In a primitive world where superstition held the upper hand, it was critically important to understand that atoms and void, and not gods, provided the laws of motion and activity. It was no less important to show that despite the illusions and possibilities of error, Nature has provided us with mechanisms - faculties of observation - that can be trusted to produce reliable results. The ancient Epicureans knew that they had no hope of confidence in their theories if they could not break free of blind fear of the gods and of skeptical know-nothing philosophies. And so the only way to break free from those errors was to discover the true nature of the universe and the true nature of knowledge. It was on these foundations, and not on their personal wishes, that the Epicurean founders erected the only major Western system of thought anchored firmly in the nature of things.

In the modern world we have flattered ourselves to believe that we no longer need these Epicurean starting points. Throwing caution to the wind and leaning fully on the promises of public education, men and women of science have entrusted generations of children to teachers who were often steeped in the same skepticism and religion which Epicurus had rebelled against.

I find it difficult to believe that many people can still have confidence in a rosy outlook arising from modern education. Across the globe Western civilization faces challenges from anti-scientific cultural orientations, and the establishments of the West seem only to compete in rushing toward their own destruction.

In this environment there is a great need to remind people that long before Greco-Roman civilization was itself overcome by other-worldly cultural influences two thousand years ago, the antidote to mysticism had been developed in Athens. One man had stood up and shown the way to defeat both skeptical know-nothings in philosophy and the zealotry in religious mysticism.

As we face those same two challenges again today, we ought to stop and look at the method of argument Epicurus chose to wage his battle. Epicurus did not start by selecting an ethical system to suit his taste. Not only did he want nothing less than the truth, Epicurus knew that only reasoned argument based on observation was enough to give one confidence that a

system preferred by Nature actually existed.

Many of us find great personal comfort in studying Epicurus and learning that the standards of the modern commercial, centralized, mystical, and yet also skeptical world are not the only standards that one can choose to follow. But even as we find personal comfort in knowing that there is nothing to fear in death, that the gods do not choose our fate, and that real happiness is possible living life here on earth, many of us face fear and anxiety worrying about the future of our relatives and friends in a world spinning out of control.

The philosophy of Epicurus can show the way forward to both personal and community happiness. Epicurean philosophy was not defeated because it was wrong, but because having the right ideas is never sufficient for living successfully. Living successfully requires action, and as the years went by in the ancient world, those who fought for Epicurean ways of life did not develop the actions required to stem the tide of mysticism and skepticism.

Today, Epicurean philosophy can lead to successful action only when it is properly understood. Much work needs to be done to show the world that Epicurus pointed toward happiness, not stoic emotionlessness, as the goal of life. Likewise, people must come to see that the Epicurean method leads to confidence that our actions can be effective, not resignation that we are the playthings of fate.

The proper place to start is to begin to follow the path first staked out thousand years ago - the trail blazed by Epicurus.

Also from the Facebook Group this week:

At the Epicurean Facebook group this week Illka V. posted that we should soon have access to [an excellent new lecture by Stephen Greenblatt, author of "The Swerve."](#) We also received some good news this week that even though the full Epicurus.info site is not yet back up, [important parts of it are available by checking at least two other locations](#) where mirrors have been established.

Also, Jason B. linked to an [inspiring life outlook by a 92-year old lady](#) that rings with Epicurean perspective, and Leonard M. linked to a Yale lecture on [Roman influences in the later development of Athens](#).

Recent Posts at NewEpicurean.com:

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Post by "Cassius" of November 14, 2015 at 11:25 PM

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This is the one hundred and thirty-second in a series of weekly reports on news from the world of Epicurean Philosophy. At the [Epicurean Philosophy Group](#) we are dedicated to the study and productive discussion of Epicurean Philosophy and its application to daily life. Our goal is also, in the words of Lucian, to "**strike a blow for Epicurus - that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams, who alone had and imparted true insight into the good, and who brought deliverance to all that consorted with him!**"

TANTUM RELIGIO POTUIT SUADERE MALORUM!

When many people today think of Epicurean philosophy and its emphasis on "pleasure," they tend to focus on Epicurus' advice to tailor our lifestyles toward a long-term view where pleasure can be sustainable over time, rather than pursuing temporary peaks of momentary pleasure which often lead to misery. That is a very true and valuable observation, but if it is all one takes away from the study of Epicurus, some very important points will be missed.

Some of those who study Epicurus move to the next stage, where they learn that Epicurus gave a powerful critique of religion based on deductions from natural science. Starting with the observation that nothing comes from nothing, and then adding that nothing goes to nothing, Epicurus set out a firm, understandable, and persuasive basis for grasping that the universe was not created at a single moment in time as the plaything of a god, but in fact that the universe is composed of elements that are themselves eternal, everlastingly rearranging themselves according to the laws of nature that arise from the properties of those elements. This understanding is the essential launching-pad for freeing ourselves from fear of superstition that we are at the mercy of gods.

But on a weekend where another Islamic terrorist atrocity has been committed in Paris, this is a good time to remember the relationship of these two fundamental Epicurean insights.

Epicurus was the type of philosopher who integrated his ideas into a consistent whole, one supporting the other, with nothing retained in the system that was not important and

fundamentally related to the other.

In the case of "pleasure" and "the true nature of the gods," Epicurus saw a crucial relationship: Not only is the world wrong in asserting that the **universe was created** by gods, the world is wrong in thinking that these gods **control the destiny of men**.

Epicurus held that the universe as a whole operates, and that individual worlds come into existence and fall apart again, according to the mechanical laws that govern the properties and movements of the elements of which the worlds consist. But Epicurus also saw that men and higher living beings do not act mechanically and totally predictably. From this observation he knew that there were other forces at work in the universe that have the capacity to break free from strict determinism.

We know this elemental capacity that can break free of determinism by the name that comes down to us through Lucretius - The Swerve. But Epicurus went further, and observed that the free actions of living beings was not chaotic, but was itself coordinated by something that gives rise to all the forms of life we see around us. What was that coordinating force? *The faculty of living beings to experience pleasure, accompanied by the corresponding faculty of experiencing pain.*

It is this force of nature - pleasure as personified by Venus - which Lucretius addresses when he says "Since thou then art sole mistress of the nature of things and without thee nothing rises up into the divine borders of light, nothing grows to be glad or lovely..."

When one stops and thinks, it is easy to see that neither pleasure nor pain are inherent, intrinsic qualities. Neither pain nor pleasure exist in a particular object by the very "essence" of that object, as Aristotle, for instance, might have said. For example, bombs and bullets such as were unleashed on innocent people this weekend in Paris can both have beneficial and life-promoting uses when employed for the defense of the innocent, or when used to prevent the innocent from being attacked in the first place. A piece of the finest chocolate cake can be the greatest pleasure to a hungry vigorous man, or the worst torture to the emaciated dying man whose throat is too tight and dry to eat it. There is nothing in bullets or bombs that make them inherently painful in all circumstances, and nothing in chocolate cake that makes it inherently pleasing in all circumstances.

When Epicurus delivered the world from fear of the gods, he did not leave us adrift with no motive, no guidance, and no mechanism to discern our proper path in nature. The hatred that religions have always felt toward pleasure - a hatred shared by the stoic-like philosophers who suppress emotion along with all joy in life - is motivated by the reverse of Epicurus' insight.

The enemies of pleasure are not so stupid as to think that sex or a piece chocolate cake are the tools of Satan or the path to insanity, but they are happy for those who are not smart enough to see through their argument to think so. The enemies of pleasure know why they fight it - *because pleasure is in fact the most important faculty given to men* - more important than seeing or hearing or any other - because it is only by pleasure that we receive the ultimate guidance of nature on how to live our lives. It is *this ultimate guidance* that the religions and stoic philosophies seek to replace with "holiness" or "virtue" - and which they fear the most, because the faculty of pleasure is the living repudiation of their own rejection of this world in favor of their own dreams. No matter whether those dreams are based in religious words of "god is great" or whether "reason is the highest virtue," the common theme is that these men

try to convince you that nature has left you adrift and helpless, dependent on their own exclusive insights into how to live.

In our Epicurean discussions we have quoted this before, but here is a good time to remember the words of another self-declared Epicurean. Thomas Jefferson saw through the posturing of false philosophy and false religion, and tried to tell people that neither are necessary for them to understand how to live. Instead, Jefferson wrote, nature has given us a "moral sense" - not a sense grounded in syllogisms or in revelation, but in the very nature of man:

"He who made us would have been a pitiful bungler, if he had made the rules of our moral conduct a matter of science. For one man of science, there are thousands who are not. What would have become of them? Man was destined for society. His morality, therefore, was to be formed to this object. He was endowed with a sense of right and wrong, merely relative to this. This sense is as much a part of his Nature, as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling; it is the true foundation of morality, and not the [beautiful], truth, &c., as fanciful writers have imagined. The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree. It may be strengthened by exercise, as may any particular limb of the body. This sense is submitted, indeed, in some degree, to the guidance of reason; but it is a small stock which is required for this: even a less one than what we call common sense. State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well, & often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules.

Praying and holding candles appears to be way many in the western world's have decided to respond to their worst enemies - by begging for mercy, rather than standing up for their right to pursue happiness as Nature created them to do. But that's not the path that Epicurus blazed for us, and it's not the path that Lucretius set out for us as the Epicurean example of how to live. It's time to recall that before Lucretius wrote the words at the head of this column - "So much does religion have the power to persuade to evil deeds" - he also wrote these other words, telling us about a man of Greece who refused to bow and kneel to false religion:

When human life to open view lay foully prostrate upon earth, crushed down under the weight of religion, who showed her head from the quarters of heaven with hideous aspect, lowering upon mortals, a man of Greece ventured first to lift up his mortal eyes to her face, and was first to withstand her to her face.

This man neither stories of gods nor thunderbolts nor heaven with threatening roar could quell: these things only chafed the more the eager courage of his soul, filling him with desire to be the first to burst the fast bars of nature's portals.

Therefore the living force of his soul gained the day: on he passed, far beyond the flaming walls of the world, and traversed throughout in mind and spirit the immeasurable universe; And from there he returns a conqueror, to tell us what can, and what cannot come into being; in short, on what principle each thing has its powers defined, its deep-set boundary mark.

Therefore religion is put underfoot and trampled upon in turn; and we his victory brings level with heaven.

These are not the words of men who cowered in their caves at the face of danger, or who stood silent against lies about nature and the gods. These are the philosophical leaders who taught us the only thing worth fighting for is our right to live happily. Only by remembering the path that Epicurus blazed does the remnant of free, happy, Western Civilization have a chance to save itself the latest onslaught of religious zealotry and false philosophy that we have been fighting for two thousand years.

From the [Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group](#) this week:

We've had a very active week at the Facebook group this week, with far too much for me to do justice to here. Special thanks go to Tadit Anderson for several very substantive posts, including this one on [Benjamin Farrington](#), author of a book on Epicurus and on politics in the ancient world. Alexander D. started a helpful thread on "[what brought about your interest in Epicurus](#)," and Hiram started a thread to [welcome new members](#). [Justin F. posted a link to a blog entry](#) he wrote on an Epicurean theme, and then as the week ended we had an ongoing series of posts on the Paris terrorist attack. Thanks to all who participated this week! We have much to talk about and we appreciate all who post comments, questions, or links to information of relevance to our study of Epicurus.

Recent Posts at [NewEpicurean.com](#):

- [Dawn of A New Age Of Epicurus](#) If you follow the world of politics, the last ten days in the USA have provided an important reminder: where passions run high, truth is often the first casualty. If...
- [Peace and Safety For Your Twentieth of October – Tips on Epicurean Reasoning from Philodemus](#) Peace and Safety to the Epicureans of today, no matter where you might be! Every day, not just the Twentieth, is a good day to remember that Epicurean philosophy teaches a...
- [The Epicurean “Method of Analogy” in Philodemus, And Its Vital Importance to Us](#) What do we do when we are confronted by differences of opinion among people who believe very strongly in their ideals, even though those ideals vary tremendously from person to...
- [“This Week In Epicurean Philosophy”](#) For the last several years (one hundred and twenty five weeks, to be exact) I have been producing a short weekly summary of notable links and discussions on the Facebook...
- [“Quantity” Does Not Equal “Type”](#) The diagram associated with this post is intended to dramatize the question: Does any quantity of a thing ever change that thing into its opposite? When Epicurus stated that there...

Thanks to all who participated in the Facebook forum this week. As always, if you have any

comments, questions, or suggestions, please add a comment or participate in the [Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group!](#)

- - - **Live Well!**

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Resources for Epicurean Philosophy On The Internet

There are many find Epicurean websites on the internet, so be sure you are aware of the main ones. This newsletter is brought to you by <https://www.epicureanfriends.com/www.NewEpicurean.com>. Two other very active and important websites are [SocietyofEpicurus.com](#) and [Menoceus.blogspot.com](#)

There is also an active website in Greece (mostly in the Greek language) at [Epicuros.net](#). Please be sure to check the list at [EpicurusCentral.wordpress.net](#) for a full list, and let us know if other sites should be mentioned here.

Options for those who wish to discuss Epicurus on the internet include:1- If you are focused primarily on Epicurus, and you want to participate in a forum where people will defend Epicurus strongly from all challenges, then you have two Facebook options. Our open and main group, entitled simply "[Epicurean Philosophy](#)," is the home base of this post. Anyone can read the posts there, and all you have to do is ask in order to join. (Note that there is an "About" and a "Sticky" post with our forum rules.)

2 - If you are someone whose views are fully formed, and you've combined several disparate viewpoints into your own personal mix, and you mainly want to talk casually to other people of the same eclectic type, there are several excellent facebook groups including [EPISTOBUZEN](#) and "[Epicureanism for Modern Times](#)." 3 - If you prefer to post in a "private" group where your posts are not readable by outsiders, we have "Epicurean Private Garden." Because it is a private group, you cannot find it by searching, and you have to email one of our admins in the open group if you wish to join. Please note that our About and Sticky Post rules in the private forum are the same as the open forum, and the private forum will be moderated to the same standards as the open forum (or perhaps slightly tighter!)

4 - If you are not only focused primarily on Epicurus, but you wish to assist with a forum platform where pro-Epicurean activists can build for the future, check out <https://www.epicureanfriends.com/> Work is starting on a FAQ and other resources. Anyone can read the posts, but only approved members can create new posts or comment.

5 - If your interest is primarily on the scientific research side, such as implications of quantum mechanics and related theories, be sure to check out "[Epicurean Touchpoints](#)" at Facebook.

Please be sure to check out the list of websites at <http://www.epicuruscentral.wordpress.net/> for the latest available sites. If you know of sites that should be mentioned here, please [send me an email](#).

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