

# Episode One Hundred Forty-Seven - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 03 - True Opinions And False Opinions About Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of November 3, 2022 at 9:24 AM

Welcome to Episode One Hundred Forty-Seven of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

Each week we'll walk you through the ancient Epicurean texts, and we'll discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at [EpicureanFriends.com](http://EpicureanFriends.com), where you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics.

We're now in the process of a series of podcasts intended to provide a general overview of Epicurean philosophy based on the organizational structure employed by Norman DeWitt in his book "Epicurus and His Philosophy."

This week we discuss a series of Points and Counterpoints which Norman DeWitt describes as "True Opinions / False Opinions" about Epicurus:

- **True Opinions - False Opinions**

- Epicurus' Place In Greek Philosophy:
  - True: Epicurus came immediately after Plato (idealism; absolutism) and Pyrrho (the skeptic). Platonism and Skepticism were among Epicurus' chief abominations.
  - False: Epicurus taught in response to Stoicism. (False because Epicurean philosophy was fully developed before Zeno began teaching Stoicism.)
- Epicurus' Attitude Toward Learning:
  - True: Epicurus was well educated and a trained thinker.
  - False: Epicurus was an ignoramus and an enemy of all culture.
- Epicurus' Goal For Himself And His Work:
  - True: Epicurus was not only a philosopher but a moral reformer rebelling against his teachers.
  - False: Epicurus was nothing more than a copycat who was ungrateful to his teachers.
- Epicurus' Place in Greek Scientific Thought:

- True: Epicurus was returning to the Ionian tradition of thought which had been interrupted by Socrates and Plato. Epicurus was an Anti-Platonist and a penetrating critic of Platonism.
  - False: Epicurean scientific thought simply copied Democritus.
- Epicurus' Role As a Systematizer:
  - True: As with Herbert Spencer or Auguste Comte, Epicurus was attempting a synthesis and critique of all prior philosophical thought.
  - False: Epicurus was a sloppy and unorganized thinker whose system-building is not worth attention.
- Epicurus' Dogmatism:
  - True: Epicurus' strength was that he promulgated a dogmatic philosophy, actuated by a passion for inquiry to find certainty, and a detestation of skepticism, which he imputed even to Plato.
  - False: Epicurus' demerit was that he promulgated a dogmatic philosophy, because he renounced inquiry.
- Epicurus' View of Truth:
  - True: Epicurus exalted Nature as the norm of truth, revolting against Plato, who had preached "reason" as the norm and considered "Reason" to have a divine existence of its own. Epicurus studied and taught the nature and use of sensations, and the role in determining that which we consider to be true.
  - False: Epicurus was an empiricist in the modern sense, declaring sensation to be the only source of knowledge and all sensations to be "true."
- Epicurus' Method For Determining Truth:
  - True: Epicurus taught reasoning chiefly by deduction. For example, atoms cannot be observed directly; their existence and properties must be determined by deduction, and the principles thereby deduced serve as standards for assessing truth. In this Epicurus was adopting the procedures of Euclid and parting company with both Plato and the Ionian scientists.
  - False: Epicurus was a strict empiricist and taught reasoning mainly by induction.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/51809292>

---

## Post by "Cassius" of November 7, 2022 at 4:26 AM

Episode 147 - The third of our Introductory series of podcasts on Epicurean Philosophy is now available. This week we focus on "True Opinions And False Opinions about Epicurus."

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/51809292>

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2727-episode-one-hundred-forty-seven-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-03-true-opinion/>

---

## Post by “Don” of November 7, 2022 at 9:20 AM

One of my favorite fragments is:

163. "Flee from all indoctrination, O blessed one, and hoist the sail of your own little boat." (My own translation) παιδείαν δὲ πᾶσαν, μακάριε, φεῦγε τᾰκάτιον ἀράμενος.

I really like this one! The "flee" φεῦγε is the same word that Epicurus uses as the title of his work commonly called "On Choices and Avoidances," and I've shared my thoughts on that word elsewhere in the forum. I've chosen "indoctrination" here for παιδείαν since that is what Epicurus seems to consider the prevailing system of education in his time to be, nothing more than indoctrination. I also like the image of the τ(ο) ἀκάτιον, "a small boat or skiff with a single sail." That's why I chose "little boat" instead of ship, for example, but didn't choose a specific kind of boat because who (other than one who sails) knows the difference among skiff, dinghy, skow, etc. It's just a small craft. My perspective is that this encapsulates the Epicurean concept of self-reliance perfectly! However, it doesn't include the idea of friendship. So, maybe we need to find our own path, our own art of living; but, once we've embarked, we'll find like-minded individuals with whom to walk the path with us - to join our small flotilla to keep the metaphor of this saying. The journey comes first. We find companions along the way.

Plutarch, On Listening to Lectures, c.1, p. 15D: Shall we ... force them to put to sea in the Epicurean boat, and avoid poetry and steer their course clear of it?

Note: In L&S, under παιδεια - 2. training and teaching, education, opposite of τροφή,

τροφή: nourishment, food; that which provides or procures sustenance; a meal ; nurture, rearing, upbringing; education

II.nurture, rearing, bringing up, Hdt., Trag.; in pl., ἐν τροφᾰῖσιν while in the nursery, Aesch., etc.

rearing or keeping of animals

a place in which animals are reared

So it looks to me like τροφή has more of a connection to nature whereas παιδεία has more of a sense of acculturation, something imposed or overlaid on the individual.

On the word for boat:

ἀκάτιον Dim. of ἄκατος Note: τᾰκάτιον = το + κατιόν e.g., ταγαθον

I. a light boat, Thuc., etc.

II. a small sail, perh. a top-sail, Xen., Luc.

Modern Greek = dinghy, small skiff

ἀράμενος middle masculine participle of "lift, raise" (for yourself with middle sense).

---

## Post by "Don" of November 7, 2022 at 9:51 AM

On the "dogmatic" discussion, this goes back in part to Diogenes Laertius' characteristics of the sage:

[Epicurean Sage - Declare their beliefs and not remain in doubt](#)

Hicks: He will be a dogmatist but not a mere sceptic; Yonge: he will pronounce dogmas, and will express no doubts; Mensch: He will assert his opinions and will...  
sites.google.com

The two key words are:

Epicureans will δογματιεῖν and not ἀπορήσειν.

δογματιεῖν dogmatiein

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, δ , δμω-ή , δογμα^τ-ίζω](#)

ἀπορήσειν aporēsein

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἀπορ-έω](#)

So, my perspective has always been (similar to what [Cassius](#) was saying) that the Epicurean sage (or Epicureans in general) would take a position and lay down an opinion (δογματιεῖν) and will not remain puzzled or "skeptical" of everything (ἀπορήσειν)

---

## Post by "Don" of November 7, 2022 at 10:07 AM

Canon comes from the Greek word: κανών which was a straight measuring stick made out of reed. Canon was often used by carpenters or masons for measurement and also to test out straightness.

From this meaning, the word "canon" evolved to mean a "measurement", "norm", "standard", "regulation", "list" etc.

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, Κκ , κανυσινοσ , κα^νων](#)

---

## Post by "Don" of November 7, 2022 at 11:36 AM

First, I apologize for the length of this post!

I wasn't quite sure where to post this, but this episode of the podcast seemed appropriate after hearing your discussion on whether we need to study Plato or if it's helpful to study Plato to understand where Epicurus's perspective came from. I am inclined to agree with [Martin](#) in that we can read secondary sources and don't necessarily have to read every work that Plato and Aristotle et al. wrote to understand the philosophical discussion that was going on during Epicurus's lifetime.

However, once in a while, one runs across a revelation (at least for me) that opens up a whole new line of understanding and possible exploration.

So, what was my revelation? And I freely admit this may only be a revelation to me. I can't remember if DeWitt brings this up...

I'm reading *The Faith of Epicurus* by Benjamin Farrington ([able to be borrowed online an hour at a time from Internet Archive](#); I borrowed mine from the library) and came across a very interesting section that, to me, bears directly on the whole infamous "existing on bread and water" debate concerning Epicurus. Academics and the general public use this to say that Epicurus lived ONLY on bread and water. I've addressed this - from my perspective - misinterpretation in [my translation of the Letter to Menoikeus \(p. 72\)](#). BUT Farrington brought to light for me a related but different thread that I may very well incorporate into a revised edition of my translation at some point in the indeterminate future.

In Chapter 1, Farrington calls attention to the section in Plato's *The Republic* where Socrates is discussing the earlier or simple origins of the way of life in the city and how it has evolved. Socrates appears to be advocating for the simpler way of life. Here is the excerpt - emphasis is mine - from the [Perseus Digital Library](#):

Quote from Plato "The Republic"

Socrates:

First of all, then, let us consider what will be the manner of life of men thus provided. Will they not make bread and wine and garments and shoes? And they will build themselves houses and carry on their work in summer for the most part unclad and unshod and in winter clothed and [372b] shod sufficiently? And for their nourishment they will provide meal from their barley and flour from their wheat, and kneading and cooking these they will serve noble cakes and loaves on some arrangement of reeds or clean leaves, and, reclined on rustic beds strewn with bryony and myrtle, they will feast with their children, drinking of their wine thereto, garlanded and singing hymns to the gods in pleasant fellowship, not begetting offspring beyond their means [372c] lest they fall into poverty or war?"

Here Glaucon broke in: "No relishes (ὄψον is anything eaten with bread, usually meat or fish) apparently," he said, "for the men you describe as feasting." "True" said I; "I forgot that they will also have relishes—salt, of course, and olives and cheese and onions and greens, the sort of things they boil in the country, they will boil up together. But for dessert we will serve them figs and chickpeas and beans, [372d] and they will toast myrtle-berries and acorns before the fire, washing them down with moderate potatoes and so, living in peace and health, they will probably die in old age and hand on a like life to their offspring." And he said, "If you were founding a city of \*\*\*pigs,\*\*\* Socrates, what other fodder than this would you provide?" "Why, what would you have, Glaucon?" said I. "What is customary," he replied; "They must recline on couches, I presume, if they are not to be uncomfortable, [372e] and dine from tables and have made dishes and sweetmeats such as are now in use." "Good," said I, "I understand. It is not merely the origin of a city, it seems, that we are considering but the origin of a luxurious city. Perhaps that isn't such a bad suggestion, either. For by observation of such a city it may be we could discern the origin of justice and injustice in states. The true state I believe to be the one we have described—the healthy state, as it were. But if it is your pleasure that we contemplate also a fevered state, there is nothing to hinder.

Plato goes on from here to talk about justice, etc., over the course of the rest of The Republic. "They are the subject-matter of the remaining eight books. They are also the objects of Epicurus's attack. | It can hardly be doubted that Epicurus had noted this passage in the Republic and taken strong exception to it." (Farrington, p. 17)

Farrington notes that Athenaeus in the Deipnosophistae that Epicurus was indebted to Plato for the distinction of "natural" and "superfluous" needs:

Quote from Athenaeus, The Deipnosophistae, Book 12 (511-12)

And in the eighth book of his Republic, the same Plato has previously dilated upon the doctrine so much pressed by the Epicureans, that, of the desires, some are natural but

not necessary, and others neither natural nor necessary, writing thus - "Is not the desire to eat enough for health and strength of body, and for bread and meat to that extent, a necessary desire ? - I think it is. - At all events, the desire for food for these two purposes is necessary, inasmuch as it is salutary, and inasmuch as it is able to remove hunger ? - No doubt. - And the desire for meat, too, is a necessary desire, if it at all contributes to a good habit of body? Most undoubtedly. - What, then, are we to say? Is no desire which goes beyond the appetite for this kind of food, and for other food similar to it, [512] and which, if it is checked in young people, can be entirely stifled, and which is injurious also to the body, and injurious also to the mind, both as far as its intellectual powers are concerned, and also as to its temperance, entitled to be called a necessary one ? - Most certainly not." ([Source](#))

BUT, back to the "bread and water" debate! Farrington makes note of the following excerpt in Lucretius on the Epicurean picnic that echoes *The Republic*!

Quote from Lucretius, Book 2 and 5

Yet still to lounge with friends in the soft grass

Beside a river of water, underneath

A big tree's boughs, and merrily to refresh

Our frames, with no vast outlay- most of all

If the weather is laughing and the times of the year

Besprinkle the green of the grass around with flowers.

\*\*\*

These tunes would soothe and glad the minds of mortals

When sated with food,- for songs are welcome then.

And often, lounging with friends in the soft grass

Beside a river of water, underneath

A big tree's branches, merrily they'd refresh

Their frames, with no vast outlay- most of all

If the weather were smiling and the times of the year

Were painting the green of the grass around with flowers.

(Sources: [Book 2](#) and [Book 5](#))

Display More

These two excerpts echo Socrates in the Republic, and, additionally, there is Epicurus's fragment about reclining on couches (Usener 207):

Quote from Epicurus

Porphyry, Letter to Marcella, 29, p. 209, 1: "It is better for you to have confidence {about the future} while lying on a cheap bed than to be disturbed while possessing a golden couch and an extravagant table." ([Source](#))

So, my take on all this? Epicurus is making a point in the "bread and water" sayings about enjoying the simply, everyday things (like the regular midday meal of the ancient Greeks on bread and beverage) as I mentioned in my translation. However, he's also specifically refuting Plato's ideal city-state as laid out in the Republic, what Socrates calls "the luxurious city," and is making a point of contrasting the overgrown city-state that imposes so many unnecessary desires and demands on its citizens, with what nature can provide.

I found that fascinating and worth investigating.

---

## Post by “Cassius” of November 7, 2022 at 11:56 AM

Outstanding posts Don.

I don't know if people could hear from the tone of voice but I think even Martin was employing some of the notorious dry German humor when he was talking about how it was lucky for him that he didn't spend too much time reading Plato, and I know I cut from the final version my laughing as he was saying it.

I am very pleased with these recent episodes and I think this was a good example of covering the topic briefly but decently. You simply can't spend all your time reading background material or you will never get on with living your real life.

This is one of the benefits of a group and forum like this where we can divide work and help each other share discoveries.

I have never read what you quoted from Farrington but I agree: that's a very perceptive statement by him and elaboration by you and I think that ought to one day become the standard interpretation of what the Epicurean bread and water references mean. And how much confusion and false starts toward minimalism that could be avoided if it did.

I think you'll draw some similar deep observations from Nichomachean ethics, especially along the lines that Frances Wright is pointing out and confronting the problem of Universals and what Epicurus would have really thought about it. And at that time when we can condense better explanation, the section in Lucretius Book One about how properties and qualities of atoms and bodies relates to the Trojan War and the episode with Paris and Helen will jump out at us as making total sense rather than the bewilderment that it often seems to generate.

And when you finish Nichomachean ethics, if you'll consider tackling [Philebus](#), i think you'll find similar origins of argument to unwind why "the limit of pleasure" is such a deep issue, and even how limits relate to "purity" which also seems dark to us.

This is a productive time for our discussions so let's keep them up!

---

### **Post by “Cassius” of November 7, 2022 at 12:53 PM**

On the bread and water material, this would be an excellent topic to write up your summary (not much needed other than what is above plus your conclusion) and we will post it as a blog post here and then promote on Facebook. Or of course just a post on your own blog that we can link to and copy here so it will be safe both places

---

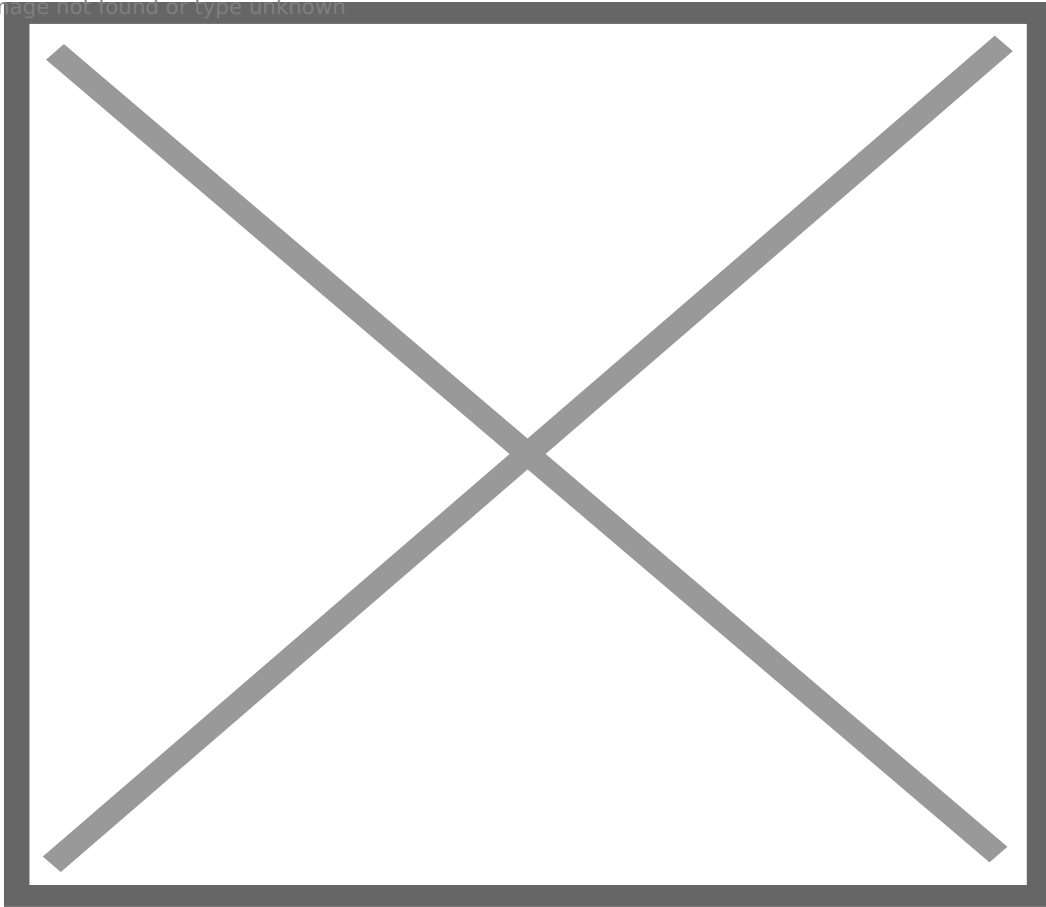
### **Post by “Don” of November 7, 2022 at 1:13 PM**

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

On the bread and water material, this would be an excellent topic to write up your summary (not much needed other than what is above plus your conclusion) and we will post it as a blog post here and then promote on Facebook. Or of course just a post on your own blog that we can link to and copy here so it will be safe both places

Oh, you're talking about a blog article here?

Image not found or type unknown



[Blog Articles - Epicureanfriends.com](https://www.epicureanfriends.com)

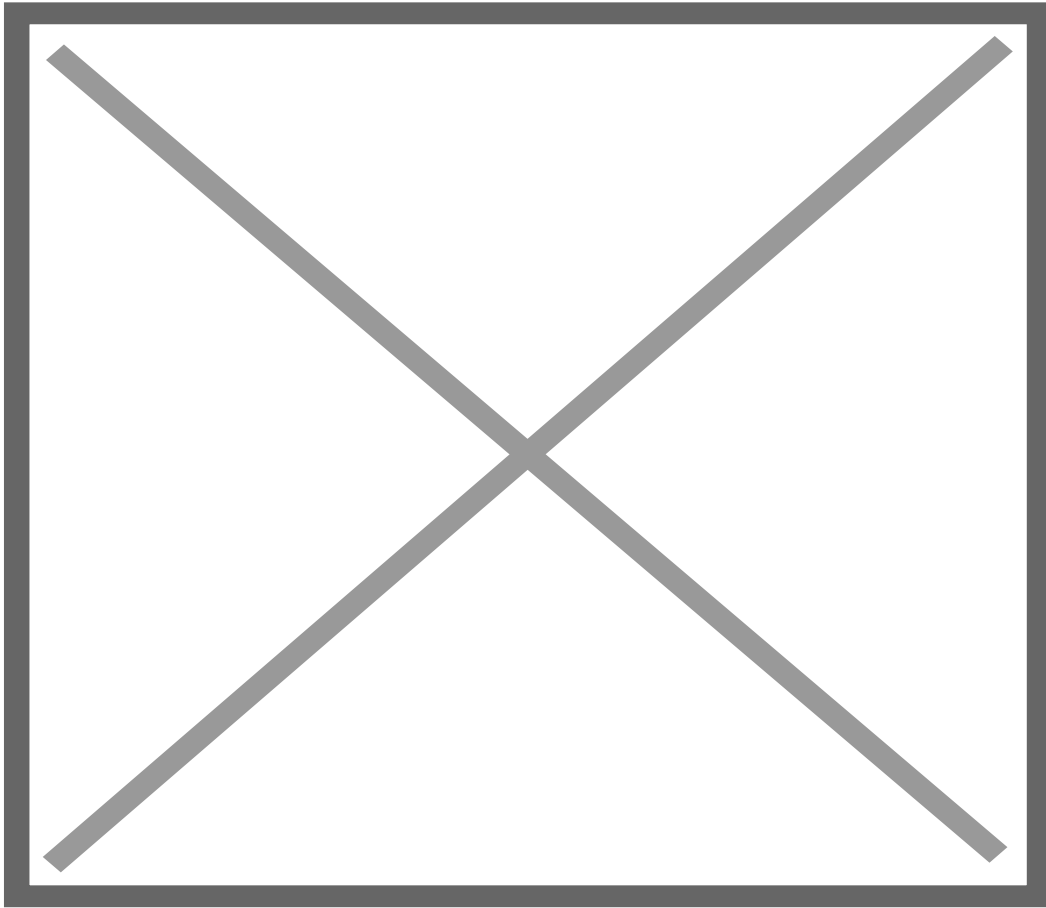
[www.epicureanfriends.com](https://www.epicureanfriends.com)

---

**Post by “Kalosyni” of November 7, 2022 at 1:58 PM**

Just pointing out that the "true opinions vs false opinions" is correcting what later writers said about Epicurus, and the some of the sources of those erroneous ideas can be found in the fragments:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2727-episode-one-hundred-forty-seven-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-03-true-opinion/>



[Usener's Fragments Edited By Erik Anderson - Epicureanfriends.com](http://www.epicureanfriends.com)

[www.epicureanfriends.com](http://www.epicureanfriends.com)

I would say this is "advanced level" Epicurean philosophy -- I don't think this is necessary, or even good for Epicurean newbies, because the basic philosophy needs to be understood first -- just my opinion.

I will post some rough notes soon (either tomorrow or Wednesday).

#### [Quote from Don](#)

So, my take on all this? Epicurus is making a point in the "bread and water" sayings about enjoying the simply, everyday things (like the regular midday meal of the ancient Greeks on bread and beverage) as I mentioned in my translation. However, he's also specifically refuting Plato's ideal city-state as laid out in the Republic, what Socrates calls "the luxurious city," and is making a point of contrasting the overgrown city-state that imposes so many unnecessary desires and demands on its citizens, with what nature can provide.

I found that fascinating and worth investigating.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2727-episode-one-hundred-forty-seven-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-03-true-opinion/>

Thank you [Don](#), and understanding this feeds back into making proper "choices and avoidances". From a modern perspective, the more luxurious tastes one has, then the more money one spends, potentially leading to credit card debt, or depleting back-up savings or retirement savings -- now with inflation being rampant, we all are probably paying a little more attention to evaluate what is necessary or not.

Also, I have been pondering the place of philosophy, and that some people might enjoy more indepth exploration, where as others (like me) prefer more simplicity and have a goal of practicality -- I "do philosophy" so that I can ponder and evaluate wise ideas for living a better life. I think that there a "levels" of intensity with regard to how to do philosophy. Some people also might enjoy holding and sifting through more details and facts than I do, and they have the mental capacity to do so. My own desire is to synthize and summarize the pearls of Epicurean philosophy and contemplating how to apply them to real life.

---

### **Post by “Cassius” of November 7, 2022 at 2:16 PM**

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I would say this is "advanced level" Epicurean philosophy -- I don't think this is necessary, or even good for Epicurean newbies, because the basic philosophy needs to be understood first -- just my opinion

In regard to these fragments definitely yes - some of them are clear and immediately helpful but many are comments written by enemies and you have to know what they are talking about to evaluate - so that is definitely advanced material. Even me ( not that is is much of a standard) find new things in them when I read through them, because they aren't material to which we regularly refer.

But once you get a good grounding in the philosophy you can find nuggets that are very helpful in fleshing out details.

---

### **Post by “Kalosyni” of November 8, 2022 at 8:35 AM**

Notes of the first half of the podcast:

True Opinions vs False Opinions

1:02 -- We are on chapter 1 and this is for people who haven't read a lot of Epicurus, we are starting at a very general level of the significant aspects - and this is to provide background

2:20 -- False opinion: that Epicurus taught in response to Stoicism.

Truth: Epicurean philosophy was fully developed before Zeno began teaching Stoicism, Epicurus does not come after the Stoics in terms of time. He comes immediately after Plato and Pyrrho. He was reacting against Platonism (ideal forms, absolute truth) and Skepticism (no truth is possible to ever understand and therefore the best we can hope for is tranquility, and to get out of the mind controversies among competing arguments about what is true or false.

3:26 -- Epicurus place in Greek philosophy - a strong rebel against the consensus of other philosophers

4:10 -- How the false opinions arose -- Cicero writing dialogs in which competing schools of philosophy are arguing against each other

5:10 -- What Epicurus was really doing was responding to Plato -- To what extent do we need to be reading Plato in order to understand Epicurus?

6:33 -- Plato's work of [Philebus](#) -- a long discussion of the nature of pleasure

8:18 -- The Epicurean response to Plato. All of philosophy is simply a footnote to Plato (Whitehead). So reading Plato will help you have a better context. According to Martin unless you are going to debate philosophy then it is not necessary to go too deeply in Plato.

11:45 -- On Famous Women -- contains a biography of Leontium

13:50 -- Epicurus was reacting against idealism -- absolute right and wrong that we derive from eternal forms

15:15 -- Epicurus' attitude toward learning -- he was well educated and he was a thinker, very methodical. The false opinion was that he was an enemy of all culture and education, and rejected all forms of logic. The wise man will not write poetry but will be able to understand it.

17:40 -- possibly a reaction against the way that children were educated in Greece -- the Gymnasium system

19:28 -- the goal of education in ancient Greece was focused on the political, to produce a good citizen and good Greek city-state that would function the most successfully according to their view, bringing the individual into conformity with these predetermined ideas of how the correct state should be and should function, and to create worker bees, soldiers, or conventional "philosopher kings" -- so Epicurus challenged this -- change your course for the correct goal of a happy life (Polyannus example).

22:03 -- Martha Nussbaum presents idea in Therapy of Desire that students in the Epicurean Garden were not allowed to speak up or challenge and they were intimidated into following Epicurus' position -- this is another example of a very wrong attitude. Correct view is that in Epicureanism nothing more important in life than to use your senses and use your reasoning to examine things, to challenge things, to question authority.

22:29 -- Epicurus' goal for himself and his work, moral reformer rebelling against his teachers. False view -- that Epicurus was nothing more than a copy cat, ungrateful to his teachers. Epicurus asked his teacher about chaos, and challenged that (idea claiming that the primordial nature was chaos, but they can't even explain what it is). We are hanging quite a lot onto a very few words of Diogenes Laertius -- Epicurus denied his teachers and claimed to be self-taught, and we don't have this is Epicurus' own words.

26:02 -- the system which he had developed quite early on was sufficient to get him thrown out of town in one instance -- but he had a very devoted spirit of inquiry, and was not willing to settle for bad answers, answers like chaos that have no explanatory power, and from which you can't derive any inferences. So he developed his own system.

26:52 -- His own philosophy was different from what he learned. There were elements from his preceding teachers but he made something different out of it -- and he completely changed such as his response to Democretus and hard determinism.

28:36 -- Would have made sense to use Democretus as a reference for atomism. But we now longer have all of Epicurus books, so can't know if he referred to Democretus. Lucretius mentions Democretus.

29:48 -- When your observations change you modify your conclusions.

30:45 -- Epicurus' role as a systematizer - attempting to build a synthesis and a wide range of thought, a broad system, a worldview from the ground up. False view that he was sloppy and disorganized. Cicero accused Epicurus of not being concerned about definition, and other aspects of logical system building.

33:02 -- Letter to Pythocles, methodology for how you should evaluate competing claims. Study of nature.

34:17 -- the work of writing responses to other philosophers, for example Leontium writing against Theophrastus. An effort to respond to all of the ideas and claims swirling around the Aegean at that time.

---

**Post by “Kalosyni” of November 8, 2022 at 10:34 PM**

Second half of podcast notes:

35:05 -- One of the most controversial aspects. And there is major division of skepticism. Dogmatism.

True opinion -- Promulgated a dogmatic philosophy actuated by passion for inquiry to find certainty -- a destestation of skepticism.

False opinion -- he promulgated a dogmatic philosophy because he renounced inquiry and Epicureans unthinkingly accepted the positions.

36:35 -- The wise man will dogmatize -- the issue of dogmatism and what that word really means.

You figure out a set of axioms and then derive more than what was just there -- physics which establish a materialist worldview, and then derive everything else as was shown by Lucretius.

37:54 -- While the other schools of philosophy would rise and fall, the Epicureans had an unbroken line of scholars which seemed to go on and on, and it was the most enduring and robust school in the the ancient world. Dogmatism was an issue which may have supported that.

38:30 -- Methodology for evaluating competing claims. Methodology for remaining aloof from certainty when you couldn't be certain about which competing claim was true. The thing that you must avoid is to be enamored of the single cause. You have to remain aloof from a conclusion until you have enough good information to actually know what you think is true about you are observing.

39:28 -- The Catholic church (the Vatican) pronouncing the assumption of Mary into heaven is a good example of dogmatism. -- Epicurus is not articulating a position in this manner and does not take position when there is clearly not enough information to take a position.

43:23 -- Book 4 of Lucretius -- those people who say that nothing can be known are essentially standing on their heads and you can't even reason with these people because their own logic and argument makes no sense -- saying they are certain that nothing can be known -- they are talking in riddles and in circles. Radical skepticism.

44:04 -- Epicurus is rejecting two extreme positions -- rejecting the idea that nothing can be known and also rejecting the idea that there is a supernatural god delivering some kind of absolute truth on everything. And looking for a fair reasonable position that is supported by the evidence --when to be confident of taking a position on something and when not to be confident

of taking a position on something.

45:40 -- Multiple causes

47:50 -- Epicurus is not telling you to go read all these books on other philosophers and then follow xyz lines of argument -- he is telling you an opposite approach which is to trust your own senses, trust your own observations, and use that as your ultimate standard for what you are going to conclude with confidence to be right or wrong -- not using some dead philosopher's arguments. It is more important for you to understand that your senses are trustworthy, that they are what you have to deal with nature as the basis for making decisions.

48:50 -- Epicurus' view of truth -- DeWitt says that Epicurus exalted nature as the norm of truth revolting against Plato who had preached reason is the norm and considered reason to have a divine existence of its own. Epicurus studied and taught the use of sensations and their role in determining that which we consider to be true.

The false opinion was that Epicurus was a modern empiricist, and that he declared that sensation is the only source of knowledge, or even that "[all sensations are true](#)"

49:38 -- Truth -- Is there a norm, is there a standard against which you can ever arrive about truth about anything -- What is truth? Frances Wright presented a version of Epicurus that was more steeped in an empiricist view than maybe he really was in antiquity -- because Epicurus thought that sensation was one leg of the tripod of epistemology -- the anticipations and the feelings -- nature furnishes the norm and nature gives us a tool kit for accessing and evaluating competing claims about everything, from ethics to explanations of phenomena -- and because we are natural, we derive from nature and we are part of nature -- pleasure and pain as guides to how we should live our lives makes sense for us, because that's the norm that nature gives us to make those kinds of decisions.

53:00 -- Epicurus' method for determining truth -- types of logic and how to pursue logic -- is logic a norm to be used as a ruler or standard -- canonic, a standard to be compared against -- in Epicureanism the word canon refers to a rule, principle, or criterion by which something is judged (an entirely different meaning than the Catholic use of the word).

56:25 -- Epicurus says: nature is the proper place to look for that authority for right and wrong (Plato takes the position that logos or reason in itself is superior to nature as this norm of truth -- Divinity, or God as a source of truth)

57: 15 -- How you view basic metaphysical claims about what nature is -- does nature have any existence independent from the human mind, does it have any existence independent from abstract principles, like reason or divine fire, is nature merely an ephemeral mirage that actually conceals the truth rather than revealing it to us, is nature merely creation and therefore simply one aspect of revelation from god but does not answer the total purpose of

revelation. So these are all the competing ideas about the role of nature in the spirit of inquiry, whether we can learn anything from nature or not. Idealist schools, nature lies to us constantly -- and if you are going to get at the truth you are going to have to penetrate the veil, see through nature into what lies on the otherside of nature (58:15) -- God, ideal forms, or divine fire, or any other of the competing ideas.

58:29 -- Latin: nil ultra -- nothing higher -- is there anything higher than nature itself as a standard of truth. Plato -- logos is higher than nature, logos created nature, and god is behind nature, superior to nature. The telos -- what is ultimately your final authority for determining something to be right or wrong -- is it some standard that logic has revealed to you, or that religion reveals to you, or is some standard that nature gives to you -- nature gives us no guidance on what to choose or avoid other than pleasure and pain -- nature is the ultimate standard of authority, then you take the faculties that nature has given you as a starting point for making all the decisions for what to choose and what to avoid.

1:00:36 -- Next week: the method for determining truth

1:01:10 -- Polemic: words of strong attack -- Books that begin with the word: "Against"

1:05:10 -- We are still on the synoptic view

1:06:29 -- Epicurus is anti-dogmatic -- but people who take the position that things can be known, that some truth is possible to obtain, are referred to as "dogmatic" -- axiomatic is a good synonym to dogmatic.

---

## Post by “Kalosyni” of November 8, 2022 at 10:45 PM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Idealist schools, nature lies to us constantly -- and if you are going to get at the truth you are going to have to penetrate the veil, see through nature into what lies on the otherside of nature (58:15)

At this point the image of this famous engraving popped into my mind:

the [Flammarion engraving](#).

And thinking further as Epicureans, there is no veil, it is all just nature.

## Post by “Kalosyni” of November 10, 2022 at 9:37 AM

Last night we had a good discussion at our weekly Wednesday night Zoom meeting.

[Onenski](#) brought up the question of: Can you be certain about some things and what can you be dogmatic about in Epicureanism? (this is my paraphrase based on what I remember). So there are some beliefs that will not change:

- belief in eternal atoms and void
- no supernatural gods
- no life after death
- no absolute forms or way of doing things

[Cassius](#) not sure I got the wording right on the last point, and did I miss anything?

Also, the idea that you need to understand the fundamental points of the doctrine before you can go into therapeutics.

---

## Post by “Don” of November 10, 2022 at 10:26 AM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Onenski brought up the question of: Can you be certain about some things and what can you be dogmatic about in Epicureanism?

### [Quote from Don](#)

On the "dogmatic" discussion, this goes back in part to Diogenes Laertius' characteristics of the sage:

<https://sites.google.com/view/epicurean...remain-in-doubt>

The two key words are:

Epicureans will δογματιεῖν and not ἀπορήσειν.

δογματιεῖν dogmatiein

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...%3Ddogmati%2Fzw>

ἀπορήσειν aporēsein

[http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...y%3Da\)pore%2Fw2](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...y%3Da)pore%2Fw2)

So, my perspective has always been (similar to what [Cassius](#) was saying) that the Epicurean sage (or Epicureans in general) would take a position and lay down an opinion (δογματιεῖν) and will not remain puzzled or "skeptical" of everything (ἀπορήσειν)

Display More

Sorry to repeat myself, but I think this bears repeating. From my perspective, the "dogmatic" assertions of the Epicureans are more about being willing to take a position in opposition to the skepticism of the Academy or Skeptics or Cynics. The Epicureans say we *\*can\** know something! That doesn't negate the holding off on an opinion until evidence is available. That's my interpretation of Diogenes Laertius's characteristics of the Epicureans. As for Cicero's jabbing the Epicurean speaker about his confident manner, I think that's just Cicero being Cicero.