

Episode One Hundred Forty-Eight - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 04 - True Opinions And False Opinions About Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of November 7, 2022 at 7:04 AM

Welcome to Episode One Hundred Forty-Eight 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, 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 continue to discuss a series of Points and Counterpoints which Norman DeWitt describes as "True Opinions / False Opinions" about Epicurus:

- **True Opinions - False Opinions**

- 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. In this Epicurus was adopting the procedures of Euclid and partying company with both Plato and the Ionian scientists.
 - False: Epicurus was a strict empiricist and taught reasoning mainly by induction, the truth was that Epicurus' chief reliance was upon deduction.
- Epicurus' As A Man of Action
 - True: Epicurus was the first missionary philosophy. Epicurus was by disposition combative and he was by natural gifts a leader, organizer, and

- campaigner.
- False: Epicurus was effeminate and a moral invalid; a passivist who taught retirement from and non-engagement with the world.
- Epicurus' View of Self-Interest
 - True: Epicureanism was the first world philosophy, acceptable to both Greek and barbarian. Epicurus taught that we should make friends wherever possible.
 - False: Epicurus was a totally egoistic hedonist ruled solely by a narrow view of his own self-interest.
- Epicurus Is Of Little Relevance to the Development of Christianity
 - True: Epicurus reoriented emphasis from political virtues to social virtues, and developed a wider viewpoint applicable to all humanity.
 - False: Epicurus was an enemy of all religion and there is no trace of his influence in the "New Testament."

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/51881689>

Post by "Cassius" of November 7, 2022 at 7:11 AM

Quote from Norman DeWitt Chapter One

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 partying company with both Plato and the Ionian scientists.

False: Epicurus was a strict empiricist and taught reasoning mainly by induction.

We did not get to this point in Episode 146, so before we record episode 147 let's make some notes and be clear on this point as to the difference between deduction and induction by defining those terms so we can be clear about when Epicurus is reasoning from the particular to the general as opposed to from the particular to the general. This is important because while we probably have little confusion about what it means to speak about particular atoms and void and their movement, we will need to spend some time talking about what is meant by "the general." The definition below uses the term "universal" and we will need to address "[The Problem of Universals](#)".

[Merriam-Webster:](#)

induction

in·duc·tion [in-'dæk-shən](#)

2 a(1): inference of a generalized conclusion from particular instances

compare [DEDUCTION sense 2a](#)

deduction

de·duc·tion [di-'dæk-shən](#)

2 a: the deriving of a conclusion by reasoning based on intuition rather than *deduction*, specifically : [inference](#) in which the conclusion about particulars follows necessarily from general or universal premises (see [PREMISE entry 1 sense 1](#))

compare [INDUCTION](#)

Post by “Cassius” of November 7, 2022 at 7:21 AM

[Seems to me that this is a good summary of the Problem of Universals From Wikipedia :](#)

The **problem of universals** is an ancient question from [metaphysics](#) that has inspired a range of philosophical topics and disputes: Should the [properties](#) an object has in common with other objects, such as color and shape, be considered to [exist](#) beyond those objects? And if a property exists separately from objects, what is the nature of that existence?[1]

The problem of universals relates to various inquiries closely related to metaphysics, [logic](#), and [epistemology](#), as far back as Plato and Aristotle, in efforts to define the mental connections a human makes when they understand a property such as shape or color to be the same in nonidentical objects.[2]

Universals are [qualities](#) or [relations](#) found in two or more entities.[3] As an example, if all cup holders are *circular* in some way, *circularity* may be considered a [universal](#) property of cup holders.[4] Further, if two daughters can be considered *female offspring of Frank*, the qualities

of being *female*, *offspring*, and *of Frank*, are universal properties of the two daughters. Many properties can be universal: being human, red, male or female, liquid or solid, big or small, etc. [\[5\]](#)

Philosophers agree that human beings can talk and think about universals, but disagree on whether universals exist in [reality](#) beyond mere thought and speech.

Post by “Cassius” of November 7, 2022 at 7:22 AM

This is discussed in both the letter to Herodotus and in Lucretius Chapter One under the topic of properties and qualities of atoms and bodies. Frances Wright comments on the issue at length in [Chapter 15](#) of her book with this as part of her conclusion, which I think is at least partly a good description of Epicurus' position as far as she goes:

“What is in a substance cannot be separate from it. And is not all matter a compound of qualities? Hardness, extension, form, color, motion, rest — take away all these, and where is matter? To conceive of mind independent of matter, is as if we should conceive of color independent of a substance colored: What is form, if not a body of a particular shape? What is thought, if not something which thinks? Destroy the substance, and you destroy its properties; and so equally — destroy the properties, and you destroy the substance. To suppose the possibility of retaining the one, without the other, is an evident absurdity.”

“The error of conceiving a quality in the abstract often offended me in the Lyceum,” returned the youth, “but I never considered the error as extending to mind and life, any more than to vice and virtue.”

“You stopped short with many others,” said Leontium. “It is indeed surprising how many acute minds will apply a logical train of reasoning in one case, and invert the process in another exactly similar.”

Post by “Cassius” of November 7, 2022 at 7:48 AM

[Don](#) I cannot remember how much you have said you have read into A Few Days In Athens. [Chapter 15](#) of her book takes particular aim at Aristotle and I bet you would find it interesting while reading Nichomachean Ethics.

Some of what she says may be pure Epicurus and some may be extrapolation, and some may go to far about never reaching a theory, but in general I think she does a good job of bringing out the issues and hazards of Aristotle's approach.

Post by “Martin” of November 13, 2022 at 5:08 AM

Quote

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.

As mentioned a few weeks ago, this formulation is wrong. If you use only deduction, you are limited to logic and mathematics. Induction is necessary to justify a theory from which you want to deduce something about reality. At Epicurus time, direct observation of atoms was not possible, and we have no texts which show how Epicurus produced his axioms about existence and basic properties of the atoms. He might have obtained them by starting with a theory based on Democritus' atomism and alternating between checking how well the theory can explain all relevant observations and improving the theory. Democritus und his predecessors might have used a similar interplay between observations and precursor theories.

Post by “Cassius” of November 13, 2022 at 8:59 AM

Martin I think you are properly calling attention to the fact that the deductive process starts with observations, so I guess the better way to say it is that he uses both.

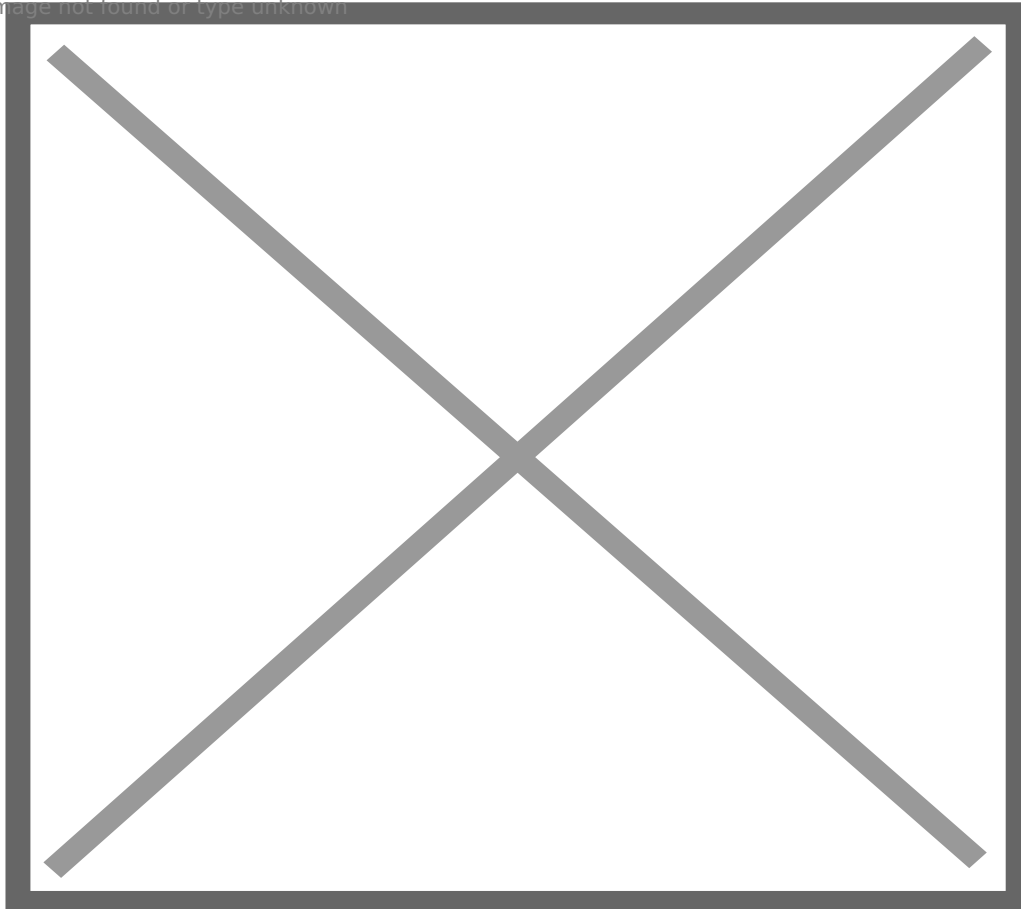
Post by “Cassius” of November 13, 2022 at 8:50 PM

Episode 148 - The fourth of our Introductory series of podcasts on Epicurean Philosophy, is now available. This week we complete our discussion of "True Opinions And False Opinions about Epicurus."

Post by “Don” of November 13, 2022 at 10:11 PM

Just had to comment on [Joshua](#) 's mention of drama at 39:10. He's thinking of Aristophanes' The Clouds with Socrates teaching in the "Thinkatorium."

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[The Clouds - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

Plato appears to have considered The Clouds a contributing factor in Socrates' trial and execution in 399 BC.

"There is a famous story, as reported for example by Aelian, according to which Socrates cheerfully rose from his seat during the performance of The Clouds and stood in silent answer to the whispers among foreigners in the festival audience: "Who is Socrates?""

Post by "Don" of November 13, 2022 at 10:39 PM

I had heard the "make a eunuch a man" quote, but I wanted to look up the origin. Diogenes Laertius quotes this in Book 4.6.43 on Arcesilaus.

[Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, BOOK IV, Chapter 6. ARCESILAUS \(c. 318-242 B.C.\)](#)

Another pleasant story told of him is this. Some one had inquired why it was that pupils from all the other schools went over to Epicurus, but converts were never made from the Epicureans: "Because men may become eunuchs, but a eunuch never becomes a man," was his answer.

"ἐκ μὲν γὰρ ἀνδρῶν γάλλοι γίνονται, ἐκ δὲ γάλλων ἄνδρες οὐ γίνονται."

The word translated "eunuch" is γάλλος

A. priest of Cybele, Schwyzer 633.11 (Eresus, ii/i B. C.), Arr. Epict.2.20.17, AP6.234 (Eryc.), 220 (Diosc.):—fem. form Γαλλάϊ Lyr.Adesp.121.

II. eunuch, J.AJ4.8.40, PGnom.244, D.L.4.43.

The word translated "man" is ἄνδρες which is man as in male person. Arcesilaus doesn't use ἄνθρωπος "human being" but "manly man."

A γάλλος as LSJ shows was a eunuch but I find the fact that this refers specifically to a priest of Cybele very interesting. Yes, Arcesilaus was obviously referring to the castration part. But, this part in the Wikipedia article is interesting too (emphasis added):

"Most modern scholarship agrees that Cybele's consort, Attis, and her eunuch Phrygian priests (Galli) would have arrived with the goddess, along with at least some of the wild, ecstatic features of her Greek and Phrygian cults."

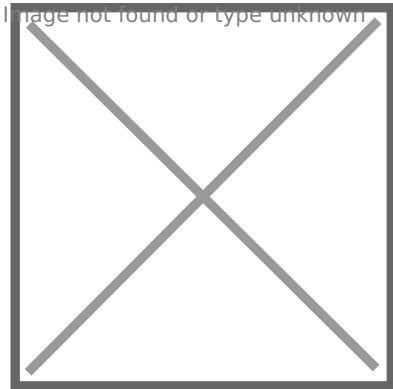
The Epicureans were slandered with saying they took part in wild, hedonistic parties, which would have dovetailed nicely with this Γάλλος epithet.

Quote

As eunuchs, incapable of reproduction, the Galli were forbidden Roman citizenship and rights of inheritance; like their eastern counterparts, they were technically mendicants whose living depended on the pious generosity of others. For a few days of the year, during the Megalesia, Cybele's laws allowed them to leave their quarters, located within the goddess' temple complex, and roam the streets to beg for money. They were outsiders, marked out as Galli by their regalia, and their notoriously effeminate dress and demeanour, but as priests of a state cult, they were sacred and inviolate. From the

start, they were objects of Roman fascination, scorn and religious awe.

EDIT: I stand corrected on the "ecstatic rites" in Wikipedia. I misinterpreted. See



[The GALA and the Gallos](#)

The Luwian ritual texts known as the Songs of Istanuwa and the Songs of the Men of Lallupiya are shown to be at once the earliest textual references to the...

www.academia.edu

"They are noted for their wailing and lamentation of Attis, Cybele's mythological companion who died after castrating himself. The processions of the galloi, accompanied by the clanging of cymbals, were characterized by ecstatic selfmutilation and bloodletting."

However, that paper goes on to say that...

"The stereotypical gallus of Roman literature wore feminine dress and heavy makeup, had long yellow-tinted hair, and was willing to perform sex acts considered degrading by the Romans."

Post by "Kalosyni" of November 14, 2022 at 7:38 PM

Notes from first half of podcast:

Continuing with true opinions and false opinions -- presenting these issues so that newer readers can be aware of them and understand how they fit into the big picture

1:54 -- Epicurus' views on truth

DeWitt said that it was a true opinion that he exalted nature as the norm of truth - and that this was a revolt against Plato who considered reason the norm, reason to have a divine existence of its own.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2731-episode-one-hundred-forty-eight-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-04-true-opinion/>

Epicurus taught that nature and the use of sensations, feelings, and anticipations are the standard for determining what we believe to be true.

False opinion to say that Epicurus was an empiricist in the modern sense -- he did not declare that sensation was the only source, and also be careful about the different meanings that the word "truth" can have.

3:00 -- commentary about the method by which Epicurus determined what was true vs what he thought was false.

This brings us to types of reasoning, deductive vs inductive reasoning -- DeWitt says that Epicurus taught chiefly by deduction adopting the procedures of Euclid, and parting company with both Plato and the Ionian scientists.

The false opinion was that Epicurus was a strict empiricist

3:58 -- What is inductive reasoning vs deductive reasoning

Inductive: Inference of a generalized conclusion from particular instances -- moves from observations to a generalization -- example: we see that from dogs around us that they have four legs so we deduce that all dogs have four legs (over-generalize -- there are some dogs that only have 3 legs) But we have to live with the knowledge that we have not observed every instance of dogs in the world (you've got a problem if you say I don't believe it unless I've seen it). Once you've seen a certain number then you decide based on probability percentage -- 95 percent sure it is correct. (9:00)

9:50 -- Epicurus talked about multiple causations, waiting when you don't have enough information, he would have acknowledged the limitations of inductive reasoning

10:10 -- Deductive reasoning: the deriving of a conclusion by reasoning in which the conclusion about particulars follows from general or universal premises -- moves from a theory then deduce by logic what is not directly obvious -- it depends on the truth of the premises, and so not really more powerful than induction because these premises have been developed through induction

11:00 -- an interplay of induction and deduction

Plato - knowledge of absolutes through reasoning -- to be sure of something, ideal forms -- he hides inductive reasoning through geometry

12:25 -- Epicurus -- the need to rely on the senses -- he believes that nature gave us only the senses, the feelings, and anticipations for determining the truth

Plato -- believed we had to go beyond the senses, and to some extent reject what the senses

were telling us

13:15 -- the problem of universals -- qualities or relations found in two or more entities -- for example: if cup holders are considered circular, then circularity may be considered a universal property of cup holders -- human beings can talk and think about universals but philosophers disagreed if universals exist in reality beyond mere thought and speech

14:25 -- Epicurus - universals are in our thoughts only

Categorization goes on in human mind, these categories aren't generated universally - does the color yellow exist on its own separate from things that are yellow, does yellow exist in the abstract apart from the things that are yellow - Martin says "No".

16:12 -- Mammals, platypus

19:00 -- Theory - an explanation for phenomenon which has taken account for all the known facts, and unknown facts

--the ability to account and assimilate new information, adjust your theory in relation to all the evidence.

22:55 -- based on probability and the need to make decisions, does that lead you to become a total skeptic.

Epicurus was not a skeptic -- he repeats in Letter to Pythocles -- "nothing in phenomena is against it". Magnetism, not possible to have an adequate understanding at that time. But for a tornado or lightning, he would say that nothing in phenomena is against it.

25:45 -- Dogmas are open to revision.

dogmatic=axiomatic. Realist as opposed to skeptical (but doesn't answer the questions). You still have to take positions on what is real and how do you determine what is real -- consistently reporting to us from the faculties which nature gave us.

27:20 -- Martin's take is that modern science is not after the truth in the way that ancient philosophers were

28:55 -- Joshua via Indiana Jones movie - Philosophy is looking for truth and science is looking for facts (my paraphrase)

31:50 -- Philosophical conversations which science can't answer, such questions as: is there life beyond the grave, dose a supernatural god exist, questions like that are particularly provinance of philosophy and religion. If you are going to make a claim, the claim is unfalsifiable and cannot be tested.

And if you hold yourself to the standard that the only thing you are totally confident in is something which you observe for yourself, you've reached the end of your ability to reason -- we don't accept that there is any evidence from anyone who has come back from being dead and by definition understand that once were dead we don't come back from it. So in terms of being certain what happens after you die, if we take the position that we haven't experienced it for ourselves so therefore we're not sure, we've reached a dilemma in our reasoning -- Epicurus was taking the position that if you stop at that point, saying I don't know, you are always going to have doubt in your mind that will cause you to live less happily than you otherwise would.

33:15 -- Is it legitimate to speculate about things

Post by "Cassius" of November 14, 2022 at 8:00 PM

Thank you Kalosyni!!

Post by "Kalosyni" of November 15, 2022 at 9:27 PM

Notes on second half of podcast:

33:00 -- Is it legitimate to speculate about possibilities without any existing evidence of your own to consider those possibilities to be valid. Is it legitimate to think you could spend an eternity in heaven and bliss because you can't rule it out and you've never been there before.

How do you sort which claims can be evaluated reasonably and which claims can't.

Christopher Hitchens - Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence - and those claims which are extraordinary but have not furnished extraordinary evidence should simply be dismissed, its not worth our time.

Thomas Jefferson and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity -- an idea has to be comprehensible before we can act upon it.

Good evidence, the nature of your evidence, the 5 senses anticipations and the feelings, as opposed to circumstantial reasoning, creating hypotheticals

35:30 -- DeWitt's importance of approaching what truth is, and how you've arrived at it (summary of what was just covered)

36:25 -- Epicurus was a man of action and not just thought. It was false to believe that Epicurus was a moral invalid, a pacifist, who taught retirement from and non-engagement with the world. The truth was that he was producing a philosophy with missionary aspects and had natural gifts of being a leader, an organizer, and a campaigner.

This was explained in "[Philosophy for the Millions](#)" essay by DeWitt

37:35 -- Joshua tells about philosophers in ancient Greece -- because philosophers are interested in the workings of nature, things that are going on in the sky, behind the scenes full attention and focus is on that so that when it comes to the real world and the things that people have to do to survive in the real world to get by, the philosophers are not adequate to the task -- many stories from the ancient world make this point -- they didn't really seem to focus on things that matter to most people

39:45 -- Many of his books were titled "Against" a particular idea or person which may be why he was considered combative

It seems from the very beginning that it was set up to be a school, it was intended to be an organized presentation of a reform movement

40:25 -- Epicurus' view about self interest -- it's false to say that Epicurus was a totally egoistic hedonist ruled solely by a narrow view of his own self interest, focused on the pleasure of the moment.

It was true that this was the first world philosophy that was acceptable to both Greeks and non-Greeks, and that Epicurus taught that we should make friends whenever possible. So it is not exclusively inward facing, but it was focused on the result of living a pleasurable life which cannot be obtained successfully in most cases unless you are to some extent engaged with the world around you -- emphasis on friendship and living among people who are your friends -- He was not an isolated thinker -- self-interest must be supported by action in the real world among your friends.

42:00 -- the false accusation that Epicurus was an "isolated thinker" doesn't go into how his followers were called "pigs in his heard" by his detractors. It was said that unlike other philosophical schools, no one was seen to leave the Epicurean school to join the other schools and so they were compared to becoming eunuchs. Scathing portrayal of Epicureans as being effeminate and lacking self-awareness in the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure, as being stupid, and poor citizens.

43:55 -- Ayn Rand, Objectivism, book: The Virtue of Selfishness -- false choice between the goal of should be for your own interest as opposed to other people's interests. Epicurus would condemn the idea that your own selfishness is the goal -- ultimate goal is pleasure and cannot achieve that if you put your own interests above others -- Epicurus says sometimes you are going to die for a friend. You are going to realize there is going to be a time for putting your interests first and a time for putting other people's interests first - the goal of living pleasurably

46:00 -- he said that to hold property in common showed a lack of trust among his members so that not to be done.

Establishing more friendship, broader support for pursuing pleasure.

47:50 -- Vatican Saying 43

48:25 -- Epicurus' relevance to the development of Christianity.

False to say that Epicurus was an enemy of all religion, what was true was that he had his own views of what was a proper religion, changing the emphasis from political virtues of the state to social virtues, how best to relate to other people. Applicable everywhere.

DeWitt's view stretches Epicurus' relationship to development of Christianity - sees commonalities where most of us would not see commonalities.

False opinion was that Epicurus was just an absolute atheist, dismissed the idea of talking about divinity.

50:25 -- Rather than raising citizen soldiers of the state, he was attempting to do something more personal and social that have reference to politics

51:00 -- Pictures of Epicurus in their house or on rings

52:00 -- page 8 DeWitt says: "Epicureanism served in the ancient world as a preparation of Christianity helping to bridge the gap between Greek intellectualism and a religious way of life..."

For more see DeWitt's book "Saint Paul and Epicurus" looks at different passages in the New Testament to see what relationship they could have to Epicureans.

This book may appeal to those who are coming from Christianity and looking to study Epicurus for the first time.

54:25 -- Lucian - two camps opposed to the oracle, the Christians and the Epicureans, for different reasons

55:10 -- Next week: we will turn attention to ancient Athens and the period in which Epicurus developed his philosophy and do a little bit of biographical background

56:55 -- Won't fully understand about happiness and pleasure without this background overview of where Epicurus was coming from

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 16, 2022 at 10:53 AM

Tonight at 8:30pm ET is our Wednesday night Zoom discussion, and we will be discussing this podcast, open to established members and podcast listeners. Here is our events calendar listing explaining more about it.

[epicureanfriends.com/wcf/calendar/event/1872/](https://www.epicureanfriends.com/wcf/calendar/event/1872/)