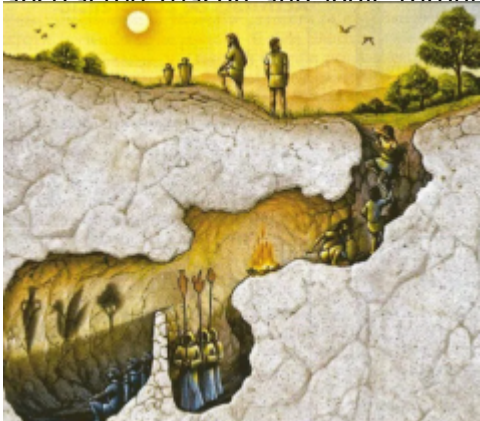


# Metaphorically Picturing Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2023 at 8:32 AM

It is good that we often get very deep in the weeds in important questions (The Canon: Three Legs of Four?; When Was Epicurus Born? What is the nature of Anticipations? etc. etc.). However given several recent podcast discussions I am remembering how important it is not to get lost in those weeds, so I am thinking this thread will be a way to keep us also focused on the big picture.

Plato is often and I think fairly identified with the "Cave" analogy, which leads to fruitful possibilities of illustrating maybe the central aspect of the anti-Epicurean philosophies: that our senses are deceptive and we are chained in a prison of shadows from which we need abstracted reason and logic (brought to us by the expert philosophers) as our only means of



How can we contrast and summarize our place in the universe under the Epicurean worldview? We have a couple of illustrations on the forum already:



(Graphic commissioned by Michele Pinto - see right sidebar of the home

page for details).

And Nate's Allegory of the Oasis (see bottom of the EF homepage for link to a description):



Both of these are now several years old, and I see that Nate's graphic was first added here back in 2018 or so.

I think over time it should be a continuing project to develop new versions of graphics which summarize the key role of Epicurus in the history of philosophy. We have allusions like the "hog in Epicurus' herd" from Horace, but most of all we have the opening of book one of Lucretius, which likely played a role in the graphic listed above from Michele (here in the Humphries version):

When human life, all too conspicuous,  
Lay foully groveling on earth, weighed down  
By grim Religion looming from the skies,  
Horribly threatening mortal men, a man,  
A Greek, first raised his mortal eyes  
Bravely against this menace. No report  
Of gods, no lightning-flash, no thunder-peal  
Made this man cower, but drove him all the more  
With passionate manliness of mind and will

To be the first to spring the tight-barred gates  
Of Nature's hold asunder. So his force,  
His vital force of mind, a conqueror  
Beyond the flaming ramparts of the world  
Explored the vast immensities of space  
With wit and wisdom, and came back to us  
Triumphant, bringing news of what can be  
And what cannot, limits and boundaries,  
The borderline, the bench mark, set forever.  
Religion, so, is trampled underfoot,  
And by his victory we reach the stars.

I am not artist myself, but it's easy to take that passage and think of many many different ways to analogize the same point - especially if we combine it with the allusions to Epicurus that start each of the other five books of the poem as well.

So the point here is that while we develop our aptitude in dealing with the details, it's even more important to develop our dexterity with the "big picture." I bet Nate has had many different thoughts about illustrations in the five years since he did his oasis graphic, and the graphic from Michele should have motivated lots of thoughts for alternative illustrations of the essence of the Epicurean approach to life - and that is why it is featured on our home page.

I may pin this post somewhere but as time goes by I hope we can expand this list of pro-Epicurean illustrations much further than we already have.

Edit: Even if you are not an artist yourself, you can still submit "word pictures" to the thread that over time will give ideas for scenarios to other people.

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**Post by “Eikadistes” of January 10, 2023 at 9:37 AM**

As *Plato's Allegory* included certain symbols that reverberate throughout his teachings (like **the Sun**, which not only represent philosophical illumination, but also, is literally a temporal manifestation of The Good), I would recommend the inclusion of Epicurean symbols. Symbols include (1) the **brave, happy leaping pig**, (2) a **bright lighthouse that weathers a ferocious storm**, (3) a **port with tranquil waters**, (4) the **waning gibbous moon**, (5) a **kylix** which might be seen on the dinner table every Eikas, (6) the **images of Epicurus, Metrodorus, Hermarchus**, or representation of "Mother Earth", "Gaia", "Venus", (*etc.*), (7) ascension to **the summit of a mountain of maximum pleasure**, (8) indivisible **particles**, (9) **natural imagery** or pastoral environments, (10) cheese, cheese, cheese, cheese, cheese, cheese, **cheese**.

At the same time, I also want to caution that one of the obstacles I ran into when conceptualizing an "Epicurean Allegory" was the tendency of metaphors to become misconstrued into mystical objects ("*the map being mistaken for the territory*"). Some of the symbols I included (like the "Desert of Superstition" and the "Mountain of Virtue") are derogations against the symbology adopted by philosophical opponents rather than a self-reflexive sort of icon.

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2023 at 9:48 AM

Yep. I hope this will end up being a long thread and an ongoing process for lots of people to use in the future. That's a very good list of symbols for inclusion, and I suspect the real trick is prioritizing and selecting the issues to be included so any particular image focuses on whatever main points it is trying to convey. There's no necessity to reduce everything down into a single graphic.

As I look at your numbered list, those are good "positive" symbols with which to identify as a goal. I suppose what Plato was doing was taking a more aggressive or argumentative topic indicative of human suffering and dramatizing his proposed solution (escape to a "true world" outside the cave). We need those kind of confrontational graphics too in addition to the pleasure aspect.

Michele's friend's "breaking the chains" graphic is almost a mirrored response to the Platonic cave metaphor. It could be varied thousands of ways, among them going beyond the implicit attribution of the situation to the glowering of the gods above, to somehow conveying (as did Lucretius) that the breaking free comes from exploring the universe with strength and courage of mind with presumably some nod toward the senses.

As we talk about this I have to wonder whether the Platonic cave analogy was in Lucretius' mind when he came up with that passage in Book One.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2023 at 9:51 AM**

As Don mentioned in another post, there is this from Lucretius too with the "hunting dog" metaphor, that might be a counter-reference to the Platonic cave problem:

#### [Quote from Lucretius Book One](#)

I could mention many things, Pile up a heap of argument-building proof, But why? You have some sense, and these few hints Ought to suffice. You can find out for yourself. As mountain-ranging hounds smell out a lair, And animals covert, hidden under brush, Once they are certain of its track, so you, All by yourself, in matters such as these, Can see one thing from another, find your way To the dark burrows and bring truth to light.  
Lucretius Book One Humphries

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### **Post by “Todd” of January 10, 2023 at 11:06 AM**

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

Michele's friend's "breaking the chains" graphic is almost a mirrored response to the Platonic cave metaphor.

I don't think I've seen this graphic; maybe it refers to exactly what I'm about to say...

Whenever I think of the cave metaphor, I can't help but give it a meaning exactly the opposite of Plato's. It's the idealists and manipulators who have people chained in the cave focused on their false reality, while the true reality of nature is outside waiting for us to discover it.

Maybe it's just me, but that seems like a far more natural interpretation than Plato's, where everything outside the cave is an allegory. No...the stuff outside the cave is just what it looks like: the real world. What goes on inside the cave almost literally describes social media, virtual reality, etc.

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**Post by “Eikadistes” of January 10, 2023 at 12:44 PM**

Here are larger uploads of my *Oasis Allegory* for clarity:



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**Post by “Todd” of January 10, 2023 at 12:59 PM**

I guess what I was trying to say above is: the cave should be an Epicurean metaphor.

It's really quite accurate to call it Plato's Cave, though. His ideas are largely responsible for chaining people in the cave in the first place. He advised rulers to do exactly that in the same goddamned book!

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**Post by “Eikadistes” of January 10, 2023 at 1:31 PM**

[Quote from Todd](#)

I guess what I was trying to say above is: the cave should be an Epicurean metaphor.

It's really quite accurate to call it Plato's Cave, though. His ideas are largely responsible for chaining people in the cave in the first place. He advised rulers to do exactly that in the same goddamned book!

That's a good point. From the Epicurean position (if we are to appropriate the symbology of the Plato's *Allegory*), the entire *Allegory of Plato's Cave* is, **itself**, actually *inside* of a metaphorical Cave in the Epicurean world, and the light of day into which the Epicurean walks is the light of particles that allows us to physically see.

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### Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2023 at 1:36 PM

#### [Quote from Nate](#)

the entire Allegory of Plato's Cave is, itself, actually inside of a metaphorical Cave in the Epicurean world, and the light of day into which the Epicurean walks is the light of particles that allows us to physically see.

With the Platonic gang being the one chaining everyone down, persuading the innocent normal people to think that they have no way to verify what the truth really is --- unless the Platonic gang itself loosens the chains (which the gang itself placed). The whole thing is an ultimate game of manipulation which encourages the exploited to see their exploiters as saviors -- a kind of "[Stockholm Syndrome](#)."

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### Post by “Todd” of January 10, 2023 at 1:59 PM

If I were doing this, some of the things I'd try to show:

- Outside the cave is just what it looks like, not any kind of allegory. Just the real world.
- The cave is labelled Plato's Cave, maybe even with Plato somewhere directing operations
- Ideas for images projected on the wall:
  - supernatural religion
  - Providence
  - Fate
  - fear of death
  - fear of divine punishment

- fear of almost anything, really
- following orders or going along with everyone else vs pursuing what gives you pleasure

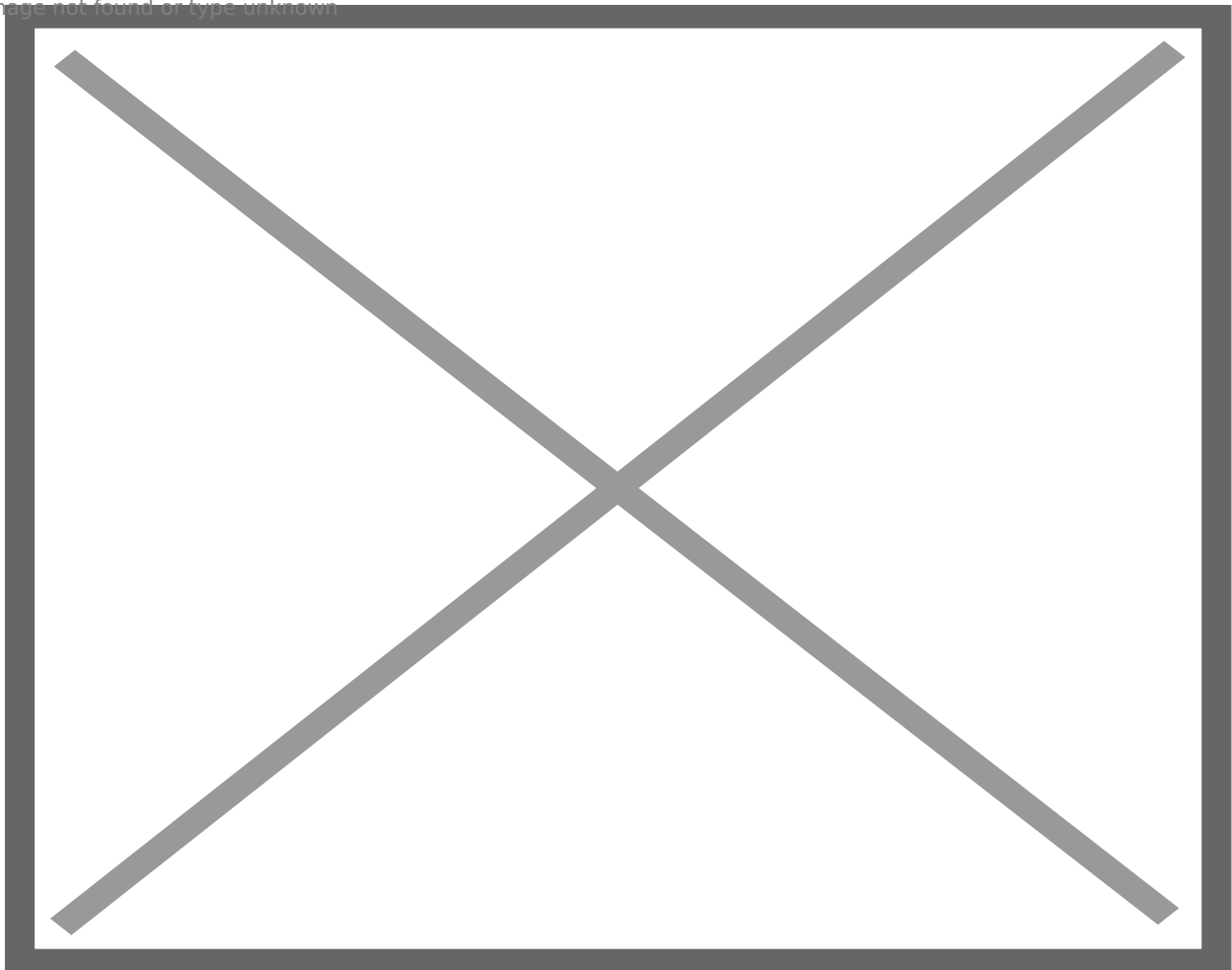
But I'm not an artist, so take this as just throwing out ideas.

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## **Post by “Kalosyni” of January 10, 2023 at 7:42 PM**

Just for reference:

Image not found or type unknown



[Allegory of the cave - Wikipedia](https://en.m.wikipedia.org)  
en.m.wikipedia.org

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## **Post by “Kalosyni” of January 11, 2023 at 8:35 AM**

This thread started out with the idea to create new forms of expressing Epicurean philosophy -- to make something analogous to Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" --- but yet illustrating Epicurean ideas. Then, since I didn't fully understand Plato's cave allegory, I got curious about it. After reading about it on Wikipedia, I then found this (a take-off from Plato's Cave) which I think could be food for thought as we think more about what allegory is, and if it could be used for Epicurean ideas.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=p-WWoGO8fY>

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## **Post by “Kalosyni” of January 11, 2023 at 8:50 AM**

I am not sure we need allegories or parables for explaining Epicureanism. It might be best to be more straight-forward on most ideas within Epicureanism.

I found definitions:

"There are a lot of stylistic devices that are used in literature. Two examples are allegories and parables. Both tools are used to help someone present important messages, key lessons, and linguistic tools. Even though many people believe an allegory and a parable or the same thing, there are actually some major differences. An allegory is usually an image, poem, or story whose interpretation can communicate a hidden meaning. In contrast, a parable is a simple story that is used to illustrate moral or spiritual lessons." [Source](#)

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## **Post by “Cassius” of January 11, 2023 at 8:54 AM**

That's a good update of the cave allegory, along the lines Todd has been talking about.

But is it clear what the takeaway is or should be? Does it answer that question?

Do they say that you only have one life to live and you better use it or lose it forever?

Do they say that there is no god or anything else telling you that something is absolutely right or absolutely wrong?

Do they say that your senses and your ability to look and see (even look and see smartphones) is you only way out of the exploitation?

Do they even tell you that these cave arguments and social media / cell phones did not just happen by themselves. They didn't just poof! into existence at the will of gods (who don't exist). Those things didn't arise on their own, but from people who have an agenda that the consumers of those things aren't part of (or more accurately, the consumers \*are\* a part of it - just not a part that they want to realize that they are playing.

So these are great ways to illustrate the problem. How do we illustrate through Epicurean principles how we got here? And how do we illustrate the solution?

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 11, 2023 at 8:58 AM**

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

I am not sure we need allegories or parables for explaining Epicureanism. It might be best to be more straight-forward on most ideas within Epicureanism.

We certainly need to be straightforward in explaining the ideas so that the allegories and parables can be developed accurately. The reason allegories and parables are useful, like art and music and the like, is that they help people get a firm grip of the core of the issue and hold onto it confidently when troubles and challenges arise, as they inevitably do. The Michelle Pinto graphic crystalizes the anti-supernatural aspect of Epicurean philosophy in the "one picture is worth a thousand words" way. Music is similarly effective.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of January 11, 2023 at 9:03 AM**

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

The Michelle Pinto graphic crystalizes the anti-supernatural aspect of Epicurean philosophy in the "one picture is worth a thousand words" way. Music is similarly effective.

I would call that an illustration of a passage in Lucretius. And I can definitely get on board with illustrations.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of January 11, 2023 at 9:13 AM

Here is a better definition of allegory, and it give the example of "Animal Farm" by Orwell being an allegory.

Quote

### What is an allegory?

An allegory is a [narrative story](#) that conveys a complex, abstract, or difficult message. It achieves this through storytelling. Rather than having to explain the pitfalls of arrogance and the virtues of persistence, a writer can instead tell a tale about a talking tortoise and a haughty hare.

Humans naturally gravitate toward good stories. Have you ever noticed how fiction gets the most shelf space in the bookstore? Stories are compelling. By using a story to talk about big, abstract, or difficult ideas, allegory takes advantage of our inclination toward story.

Sometimes, the message a writer wants to convey is dangerous to talk about explicitly. In these cases, allegory creates distance between the writer and the message. One famous example of this is George Orwell’s 1945 novel *Animal Farm*. Orwell used a story line about farm animals to express his dissent toward the Russian government, a risky subject to discuss outright.

[Source](#)

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 11, 2023 at 9:18 AM

[Joshua](#) was talking about use of metaphor in the last podcast, so we probably need his input. And don't forget that Epicurus apparently said something like the wise man won't compose poetry, but will be the only one who can intrepert it correctly. And then we have to incorporate Lucretius into what that statement means.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of January 11, 2023 at 9:19 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

How do we illustrate through Epicurean principles how we got here? And how do we illustrate the solution?

Allegory is a way to present ideas in a hidden and coded manner -- and so it is a kind of esoteric knowledge -- and I myself prefer to be much more straight-forward. I am not looking to convince anyone of anything. But I would enjoy being able to explain the philosophy more clearly to myself and anyone who might already be oriented toward an Epicurean worldview. And as such, I see no need for allegory or parable.

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 11, 2023 at 9:36 AM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I am not looking to convince anyone of anything.

But Lucretius was - and by "song" no less 😊 😊

Quote from Lucretius Book One - Humphries

I am well aware how very hard it is

To bring to light by means of Latin verse

The dark discoveries of the Greeks. I know

New terms must be invented, since our tongue

Is poor, and this material is new.

But I'm persuaded by your excellence

And by our friendship's dear expectancy

To suffer any toil, to keep my watch

Through the still nights, seeking the words, the song

Whereby to bring your mind that splendid light

By which you can see darkly hidden things.

Our terrors and our darkneses of mind

Must be dispelled, not by the sunshine's rays,

Not by those shining arrows of the light,

But by insight into nature, and a scheme

Of systematic contemplation.

Display More

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### Post by “Eikadistes” of January 11, 2023 at 10:52 AM

This approach demonstrates two, simultaneous, yet contradictory positions that I hold:

(1) We need avoid using metaphors and should strive to speak frankly.

(2) (*Yeah, right*). **Everything** is a metaphor.

I typically decide it is best to make responsible use of metaphors to which the author should be held accountable.

I suppose this is why Epicurus recognized that only a wise person is suitable to correctly deconstruct the metaphors of poetry. There is a fine line between using words that feel good but aren't really saying much and words that feel empty but are actually saying a tremendous amount of the reader would only exercise the patience required to understand.

The incidence of Lucretius writing spoonfuls of sugar to make the medicine of atomism go down comes to mind. We can also try using some of the metaphors Lucretius provides. *De Rerum Natura* seems to give Epicureans the OK to deify natural processes (like "Venus"), so we seem to have a green light to make liberal use of anthropomorphization.

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### Post by “Todd” of January 11, 2023 at 10:54 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The reason allegories and parables are useful, like art and music and the like, is that they help people get a firm grip of the core of the issue and hold onto it confidently when troubles and challenges arise, as they inevitably do. The Michelle Pinto graphic crystalizes the anti-supernatural aspect of Epicurean philosophy in the "one picture is worth a thousand words" way. Music is similarly effective.

I was discussing something like this with my 8-year old recently.

She was trying to impress me with the fact that she had memorized the lyrics to an entire song. I tried (possibly failed) to explain how having the music to go along with it made the words of the song far more memorable.

I can easily recall the words to songs I liked (or even dumb TV commercials) from 25 years ago.

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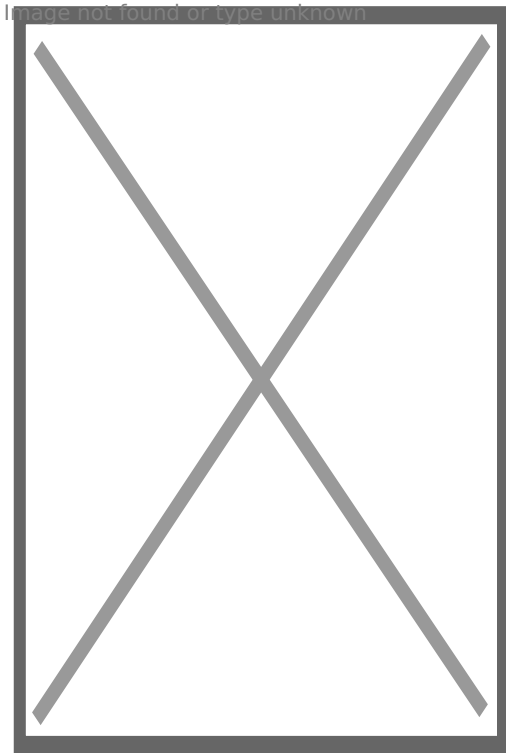
### **Post by “Kalosyni” of January 11, 2023 at 10:54 AM**

These lines by Lucretius point to the solution:

Our terrors and our darkneses of mind  
Must be dispelled, not by the sunshine's rays,  
Not by those shining arrows of the light,  
But by insight into nature, and a scheme  
Of systematic contemplation.

Is there anything else by Lucretius to add to this to be more specific?

I remember now the book "The Demon Haunted World" by Carl Sagan. Wikipedia has a good overview:



[The Demon-Haunted World - Wikipedia](#)

en.m.wikipedia.org

So would this be considered a much more clear (and modern) understanding of what Epicurus was beginning to present, by his looking to nature? When we use science correctly, is it a much more complex system compared to Epicurean philosophy? Maybe it might be good to have a table to graphically show similarities between Epicureanism and modern science.

Also, the "dragon in the garage" story in the above Wikipedia article shows how metaphor can be used to illustrate ideas.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 11, 2023 at 10:56 AM**

And it's probably also significant to note that -- probably because it was written in verse --- the Lucretius poem survives to us while the original, and probably thousands of other Epicurean texts - don't survive.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 11, 2023 at 10:59 AM**

### [Quote from Todd](#)

I can easily recall the words to songs I liked (or even dumb TV commercials) from 25 years ago.

Absolutely positively without doubt correct. And they connect emotionally even when the original topic is long obsolete, because they somehow hold some deep emotional connection.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of January 11, 2023 at 11:14 AM**

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

So would this be considered a much more clear (and modern) understanding of what Epicurus was beginning to present, by his looking to nature? When we use science correctly, is it a much more complex system compared to Epicurean philosophy? Maybe it might be good to have a table to graphically show similarities between Epicureanism and modern science.

It might be more complex, but that wouldn't necessarily make it more useful. Joshua was referring to this issue recently too in referring to the letter to Pythocles.

### Quote from Letter to Pythocles

[87] For we must not conduct scientific investigation by means of empty assumptions and arbitrary principles, but follow the lead of phenomena: for our life has not now any place for irrational belief and groundless imaginings, but we must live free from trouble. Now all goes on without disturbance as far as regards each of those things which may be explained in several ways so as to harmonize with what we perceive, when one admits, as we are bound to do, probable theories about them. But when one accepts one theory and rejects another which harmonizes as well with the phenomenon, it is obvious that he altogether leaves the path of scientific inquiry and has recourse to myth. Now we can obtain indications of what happens above from some of the phenomena on earth: for we can observe how they come to pass, though we cannot observe the phenomena in the sky: for they may be produced in several ways.

And again I think a paraphrase Diogenes of Oinoanda helps make the point:

If, gentlemen, the point at issue between these people and us involved inquiry into «what is the means of happiness?» and they wanted to say «SCIENCE» (which would actually be true), it would be unnecessary to take any other step than to agree with them about this, without more ado. But since, as I say, the issue is not «what is the means of happiness?» but «what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?», I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while SCIENCE, which is inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end.

You could put most any tool in that paragraph, and no matter how attached we are to the tool, we need to realize that it is just a tool and not an end in itself.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of January 11, 2023 at 11:34 AM**

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

But since, as I say, the issue is not «what is the means of happiness?» but «what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?»,

btw, I have always had trouble with this. What good is knowing your destination if you don't know which road to take to get there?

You could also say that this forum is a tool and not the final goal -- which from all appearances we sometimes seem to: "inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end."



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### **Post by “Todd” of January 11, 2023 at 11:40 AM**

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

What good is knowing your destination if you don't know which road to take to get there?

It's a necessary first step to getting there, isn't it?

Would you blindly follow a road if you didn't know where it was taking you? Maybe you are simply enjoying the trip for its own sake. That's fine, but still, you'd want to know that it's not taking you into the middle of a war zone (for example).

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 11, 2023 at 11:59 AM

Focused like a laser on this very point is one of the very best of Lucian's dialogs: [HERMOTIMUS - Or, The Rival Philosophies](#)

Lycinus. So you have not solved my puzzle; I know just as little as before which traveler to trust; I find that each of them, as well as his guide, has tried one only, which he now recommends and will have to be the only one leading to the city. Whether he tells the truth I have no means of knowing; that he has attained some end, and seen some city, I may perhaps allow; but whether he saw the right one, or whether, Corinth being the real goal, he got to Babylon and thought he had seen Corinth—that is still undecided; for surely every one who has seen a city has not seen Corinth, unless Corinth is the only city there is. But my greatest difficulty of all is the absolute certainty that the true road is one; for Corinth is one, and the other roads lead anywhere but to Corinth, though there may be people deluded enough to suppose that the North road and the South road lead equally to Corinth.

Hermotimus. But that is absurd, Lycinus; they go opposite ways, you see.

**Lycinus. Then, my dear good man, this choice of roads and guides is quite a serious matter; we can by no means just follow our noses; we shall be discovering that we are well on the way to Babylon or Bactria instead of to Corinth. Nor is it advisable to toss up, either, on the chance that we may hit upon the right way if we start upon any one at a venture. That is no impossibility; it may have come off once and again in a cycle; but I cannot think we ought to gamble recklessly with such high stakes, nor commit our hopes to a frail craft, like the wise men who went to sea in a bowl; we should have no fair complaint against Fortune, if her arrow or dart did not precisely hit the centre; the odds are ten thousand to one against her; just so the archer in Homer—Teucer, I suppose it was—when he meant to hit the dove, only cut the string, which held it; of course it is infinitely more likely that the point of the arrow will find its billet in one of the numberless other places, than just in that particular central one. And as to the perils of blundering into one of the wrong roads instead of the right one, misled by a belief in the discretion of Fortune, here is an illustration:—it is no easy matter to turn back and get safe into port when you have once cast loose your moorings and committed yourself to the breeze; you are at the mercy of the sea, frightened, sick and sorry with your tossing about, most likely. Your mistake was at the beginning: before leaving, you should have gone up to some**

**high point, and observed whether the wind was in the right quarter, and of the right strength for a crossing to Corinth, not neglecting, by the way, to secure the very best pilot obtainable, and a seaworthy craft equal to so high a sea.**

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of January 11, 2023 at 11:59 AM**

Quote

Quote

[259-5f0e1c4e582120c494966da5b214bb8f0ac08e9.webp](#)

[Quote from Kalosyni](#) What good is knowing your destination if you don't know which road to take to get there?

[Quote from Todd](#)

It's a necessary first step to getting there, isn't it?

Would you blindly follow a road if you didn't know where it was taking you? Maybe you are simply enjoying the trip for it's own sake. That's fine, but still, you'd want to know that it's not taking you into the middle of a war zone (for example).

Yes! This could be a good topic for an illustration!

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 11, 2023 at 12:12 PM**

An illustrator of the multiple philosophical paths problem would do well to follow what amounts to Lucian's ultimate point:

Lycinus. At least your chagrin will be considerably lessened by the thought that you are not alone in your disappointment; practically all who pursue philosophy do no more than disquiet themselves in vain. Who could conceivably go through all the stages I have rehearsed? You admit the impossibility yourself. As to your present mood, it is that of the man who cries and curses his luck because he cannot climb the sky, or plunge into the depths of the sea at Sicily and come up at Cyprus, or soar on wings and fly within the day from Greece to India; what is

responsible for his discontent is his basing of hopes on a dream-vision or his own wild fancy, without ever asking whether his aspirations were realizable or consistent with humanity. You too, my friend, have been having a long and marvelous dream; and now reason has stuck a pin into you and startled you out of your sleep; your eyes are only half open yet, you are reluctant to shake off a sleep which has shown you such fair visions, and so you scold. It is just the condition of the day-dreamer; he is rolling in gold, digging up treasure, sitting on his throne, or somehow at the summit of bliss; for dame How-I-wish is a lavish facile Goddess, that will never turn a deaf ear to her votary, though he have a mind to fly, or change statures with Colossus, or strike a gold-reef; well, in the middle of all this, in comes his servant with some every-day question, wanting to know where he is to get bread, or what he shall say to the landlord, tired of waiting for his rent; and then he flies into a temper, as though the intrusive questioner had robbed him of all his bliss, and is ready to bite the poor fellow's nose off.

As you love me, do not treat me like that. I see you digging up treasure, spreading your wings, nursing extravagant ideas, indulging impossible hopes; and I love you too well to leave you to the company of a life-long dream—a pleasant one, if you will, but yet a dream; I beseech you to get up and take to some every-day business, such as may direct the rest of your life's course by common sense. Your acts and your thoughts up to now have been no more than Centaurs, Chimeras, Gorgons, or what else is figured by dreams and poets and painters, chartered libertines all, who reek not of what has been or may be. Yet the common folk believe them, bewitched by tale and picture just because they are strange and monstrous.

I fancy you hearing from some teller of tales how there is a certain lady of perfect beauty, beyond the Graces themselves or the Heavenly Aphrodite, and then, without ever an inquiry whether his tale is true, and such a person to be found on earth, falling straight in love with her, like Medea in the story enamored of a dream-Jason. And what most drew you on to love, you and the others who worship the same phantom, was, if I am not mistaken, the consistent way in which the inventor of the lady added to his picture, when once he had got your ear. That was the only thing you all looked to, with that he turned you about as he would, having got his first hold upon you, averring that he was leading you the straight way to your beloved. After the first step, you see, all was easy; none of you ever looked round when he came to the entrance, and inquired whether it was the right one, or whether he had accidentally taken the wrong; no, you all followed in your predecessors' footsteps, like sheep after the bell-wether, whereas the right thing was to decide at the entrance whether you should go in.

Perhaps an illustration will make my meaning clearer: when one of those audacious poets affirms that there was once a three-headed and six-handed man, if you accept that quietly without questioning its possibility, he will proceed to fill in the picture consistently—six eyes and ears, three voices talking at once, three mouths eating, and thirty fingers instead of our poor ten all told; if he has to fight, three of his hands will have a buckler, wicker targe, or shield apiece, while of the other three one swings an axe, another hurls a spear, and the third wields a sword. It is too late to carp at these details, when they come; they are consistent with the

beginning; it was about that that the question ought to have been raised whether it was to be accepted and passed as true. Once grant that, and the rest comes flooding in, irresistible, hardly now susceptible of doubt, because it is consistent and accordant with your initial admissions. That is just your case; your love-yearning would not allow you to look into the facts at each entrance, and so you are dragged on by consistency; **it never occurs to you that a thing may be self- consistent and yet false;** if a man says twice five is seven, and you take his word for it without checking the sum, he will naturally deduce that four times five is fourteen, and so on *ad libitum*. This is the way that weird geometry proceeds: it sets before beginners certain strange assumptions, and insists on their granting the existence of inconceivable things, such as points having no parts, lines without breadth, and so on, builds on these rotten foundations a superstructure equally rotten, and pretends to go on to a demonstration which is true, though it starts from premises which are false.

Just so you, when you have granted the principles of any school, believe in the deductions from them, and take their consistency, false as it is, for a guarantee of truth. Then with some of you, hope travels through, and you die before you have seen the truth and detected your deceivers, while the rest, disillusioned too late, will not turn back for shame: what, confess at their years that they have been abused with toys all this time? so they hold on desperately, putting the best face upon it and making all the converts they can, to have the consolation of good company in their deception; they are well aware that to speak out is to sacrifice the respect and superiority and honor they are accustomed to; so they will not do it if it may be helped, knowing the height from which they will fall to the common level. Just a few are found with the courage to say they were deluded, and warn other aspirants. Meeting such a one, call him a good man, a true and an honest; nay, call him philosopher, if you will; to my mind, the name is his or no one's; the rest either have no knowledge of the truth, though they think they have, or else have knowledge and hide it, shamefaced cowards clinging to reputation.

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## Post by “Eikadistes” of January 12, 2023 at 1:27 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

[Quote from Todd](#)

From the Epicurean position (if we are to appropriate the symbology of the Plato's *Allegory*), the entire *Allegory of Plato's Cave* is, **itself**, actually *inside* of a metaphorical *Cave* in the Epicurean world, and the light of day into which the Epicurean walks is the light of particles that allows us to physically see.

Yep. That should do it. 😊

**Epicurus**  
**ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE**

