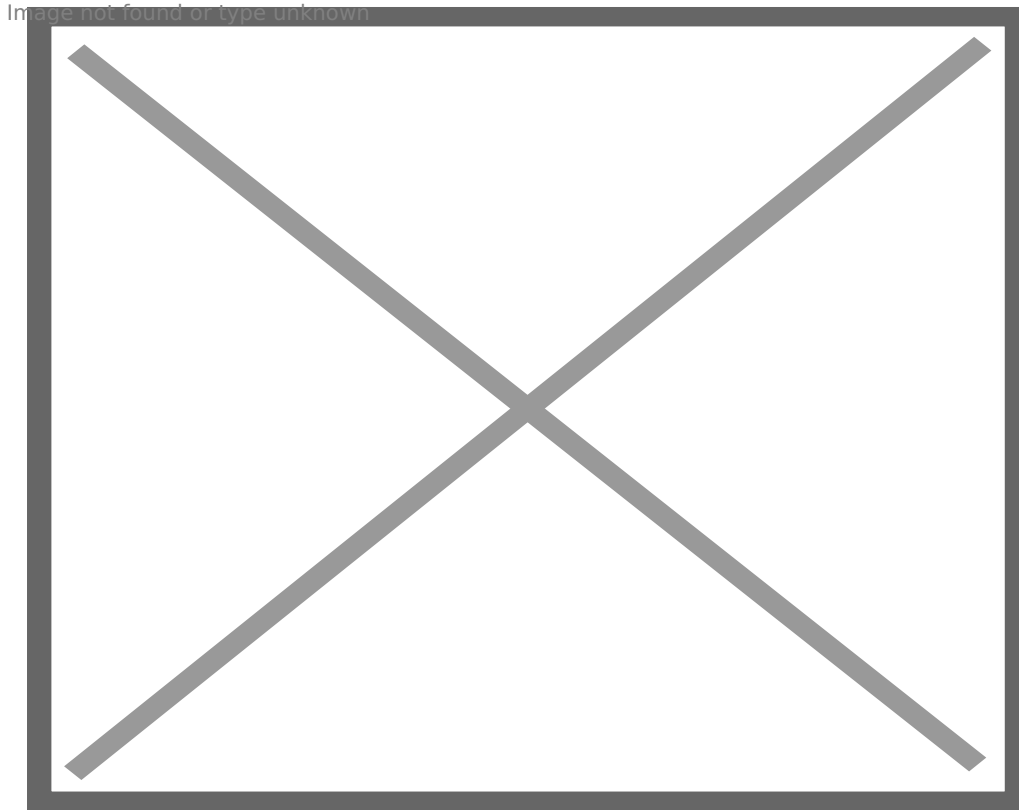


The Art of Frugal Hedonism

Post by "Don" of February 15, 2023 at 11:01 AM



[The Art of Frugal Hedonism: A Guide to Spending Less While Enjoying Everything More](#)

The Art of Frugal Hedonism is your leisurely guide to a life that both makes sense, while indulging the senses; how to live lightly but luxuriantly.

www.frugalhedonism.com

I'm working my way through this book, and it specifically mentions Epicurus. Opening this thread for thoughts on this one.

Post by "Little Rocker" of February 15, 2023 at 11:36 AM

Keep us posted. Can't help seeing that cover and thinking of Prufrock: 'Do I dare to eat a peach?/ I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.'

Post by “Don” of February 15, 2023 at 2:42 PM

First thoughts, random:

Being frugal does NOT mean ascetic or stingy or anything negative.

It takes practice to be a "frugal hedonist".

It means being aware of what you're actually spending YOUR time and money on.

Are you actually taking pleasure in what you spend time and money on.

Don't get caught up with instant gratification: instead of "pulling the lever for cheese" (classic mouse experiment metaphor), try "walking to cheese mountain, befriend the cheese miners, etc."

Relish: REALLY experience your activities. Take time to actually taste that cup of coffee. Take pleasure in the details of your life.

My note: I think frugal hedonist is a good description of Epicurus's lifestyle, much better than the ascetic he's made out to be.

Looking forward to reading more.

Post by “Joshua” of February 15, 2023 at 6:32 PM

Quote

Keep us posted. Can't help seeing that cover and thinking of Prufrock: 'Do I dare to eat a peach?/ I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.'

And something about lobsters, though I can't remember what just now...

Post by “Titus” of February 15, 2023 at 6:33 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

My note: I think frugal hedonist is a good description of Epicurus's lifestyle, much better than the ascetic he's made out to be.

My thoughts: Frugality in an Epicurean context could mean to focus on one's senses and impressions, rather than pursuing foreign ideas of what happiness is made of. Leaving things behind can help to focus on our measuring instruments and on what makes us happy personally.

I can tell you from my actual holidays, touched by a thousand beautiful impressions a day. Eating an elaborated meal or driving a cool car couldn't add anything to my happiness. The openness of my senses already fills up the cup to its fullest.

Frugality could also teach us about the limits we're able to live with and therefore how to improve resilience.

In the end I would argue, it's not about frugality, but pursuing elemental features of ourselves.

Post by “Cassius” of February 15, 2023 at 7:43 PM

I agree with virtually every practical consideration stated in the thread above, but I want to repeat a statement I just made [in another thread](#):

As usual I think it's a bad idea to try to come up with a one size fits all rule. I am haven' previously made this comment in the "frugal hedonism" thread, because I see the value in explaining words. But in the end I think the best way to convey this analysis is simply to call it "Epicurean" - and gradually begin the long crawl out of the box that we are in due to the dominance (and our acceptance) of other people's paradigms.

Unfortunately we don't have the ability to claim that our definition of "frugal" or "hedonism" is the correct one. But the word that I do think we should claim, and define as clearly for everyone as we can, is "Epicurean."

Post by “Don” of February 15, 2023 at 8:27 PM

FWIW...

Diocles in the third book of his *Epitome* speaks of them as living a very simple and frugal life (DL 10.11)

Διοκλῆς δ' ἐν τῇ τρίτῃ τῆς ἐπιδρομῆς φησιν εὐτελέστατα καὶ λιτότατα διαιτώμενοι.

εὐτελέστατα

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

λιτότατα

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

Post by “Don” of February 15, 2023 at 11:59 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I agree with virtually every practical consideration stated in the thread above, but I want to repeat a statement I just made [in another thread](#):

As usual I think it's a bad idea to try to come up with a one size fits all rule. I am haven' previously made this comment in the "frugal hedonism" thread, because I see the value in explaining words. But in the end I think the best way to convey this analysis is simply to call it "Epicurean" - and gradually begin the long crawl out of the box that we are in due to the dominance (and our acceptance) of other people's paradigms.

Unfortunately we don't have the ability to claim that our definition of "frugal" or "hedonism" is the correct one. But the word that I do think we should claim, and define as clearly for everyone as we can, is "Epicurean."

I posted over ["in another thread"](#), too, but thought this needed a response here as well.

If I go down a rabbit hole, apologies beforehand, but, just wondering which "practical considerations" are you agreeing with (just to verify and for clarity)?

So, how would you define the three terms "frugal," "hedonism" and "Epicurean" in the context of this thread/discussion?

That excerpt from Diogenes Laertius quotes Diocles as saying the Epicureans lived "a very simple and frugal life" εὐτελέστατα καὶ λιτότατα διαιτώμενοι. Those two words (linked above to LSJ) convey living a life that includes things that are "easily paid for" (which I take to mean "living within one's means") and "simple, inexpensive, frugal" or, "metaphorically, of style, plain, simple, unadorned." Those words, coupled with the modern word "hedonism" (not coined to refer to philosophy until 1828), to me provide "frugal hedonism" as an apt description. Not an exhaustive one or even one without a few hiccups, but an adequate starting point to describe Epicurus's lifestyle.. in keeping with my "bread and water simply means 'take pleasure in the everyday'."

When you say things like...

Quote from Cassius

"Unfortunately we don't have the ability to claim that our definition of "frugal" or "hedonism" is the correct one,"

...I'm not even sure I understand the point you're trying to make. (Okay, I re-read that, and it *reads* harsher than I meant it... but I don't know a better way to express my confusion.) It seems to me that Epicurus encouraged people to use words in a way that was readily understandable and not to parse and nitpick. Granted, he never called himself a "hedonist." That didn't even exist as a philosophy term until the 19th century. But the "basic" definition is someone who regards pleasure as the primary motivator of human behavior. "Frugal" might be a little fuzzy in meaning but we have a grasp that it means things like living within your means, not spending extravagantly, etc. To me, "frugal hedonism" conveys what Epicurus was conveying throughout his texts. It is an antidote to the ascetic stereotype that is so prevalent in pop culture and academia. It's certainly not a perfect phrase, but it moves toward a more balanced portrayal... although let's get through more of the book and maybe I'll have a different opinion later 😊

Post by “Little Rocker” of February 16, 2023 at 3:09 PM

I always find myself of two minds when Don and Cassius discuss this. It definitely feels odd to start off by describing Epicurus with a term people commonly associate with something else and then tack on--'but not in the familiar sense.' It risks sounding like, 'he's a gastroenterologist, but not like any gastroenterologist you've ever met.' It's what leads to the charge that he's a hedonist in name only. But then if you *don't* call him a hedonist, then you risk making it sound like the goal isn't pleasure. Not to mention that he does the same thing himself--he identifies the aim as pleasure, then complains that people misunderstand what he

means, so he tries to clear it up.

I'll be curious, Don, to find out whether 'frugal hedonism' ends up weighing in on the other stuff--like, you could be a frugal hedonist and still await your heavenly reward or be a frugal hedonist and still think the death of a child is part of a well-ordered cosmos.

As a related anecdote, my partner and I are very different people with entirely different skill sets who thankfully share the actually important commitments, and I remember when I was explaining the basics of Epicureanism to him, he said, 'Oh, I think I watched an interview with an Epicurean on [an episode of Cheap RV Living](#).' So I watched it and thought, 'Well, I can see why he would think that.' Especially when they talk about community, death, and memories.

Post by “Cassius” of February 16, 2023 at 4:24 PM

I would stress that many of these back and forths are to me hypotheticals. I can easily imagine a presentation on Epicurus that would be entirely appropriate and go like this:

1. Epicurus was a hedonist in that he believed pleasure to be the greatest good BUT he did not always seek every choice that might produce pleasure.
2. Epicurus held that tranquility is a great pleasure BUT not that tranquility is the goal toward which all else aims.
3. Epicurus taught that pain was "evil" BUT he did not teach that pain should always be avoided.
4. Epicurus was an atheist BUT not the kind you think - he believed that gods do exist.
5. Epicurus believed that gods exist BUT not the kind of gods you think.
6. Epicurus was an empiricist of a sort BUT many of his most important conclusions were based on deductive reasoning about things he never personally experienced himself.
7. Epicurus held many positions that will strike you as Utilitarian BUT he did not believe in "the greatest good for the greatest number."
8. Epicurus was highly skeptical of claims of authority BUT he took strong positions himself about things that he believed to be provably true.
9. Epicurus was in many ways a frugalist BUT not always and it's important to know the exceptions.
10. Epicurus believed in virtue BUT not that it is an end in itself.
11. Epicurus held that "[all sensations are true](#)" BUT not that every sensation is accurate to all the facts.
12. Epicurus held that [death is nothing to us](#) BUT not that the manner and time of death is not significant.

13. Epicurus held that friendship is tremendously important for our happiness BUT Epicurus was not an "altruist" as that word is generally understood.

And I bet we could go on and on and on, and in the right circumstances, this is a probably a good way to introduce the topics. But is it the only way? Certainly not. Is it the best way? Well, in some circumstances yes, but it isn't the way (for example) that Epicurus himself or Lucretius or Diogenes of Oinoanda organized their presentations, and in a better world (?) we shouldn't have to and won't have to do that either.

Post by "Don" of February 16, 2023 at 11:03 PM

Chapters 3-7 notes

Take care of the things you have. Don't automatically default to "throwaway materialism" and over consumption.

Appreciate what you have and what went into it: author's example - appreciate that plastic chair you have, have gratitude for the workers that smelted the metal in the legs, mined the ore, worked in the factory. Don't just throw it away because you're bored with it.

Be aware of where you're spending your money!

Buy quality when possible and take care of it.

Be mindful of what you're throwing out and don't be wasteful.

(*Side note: the authors may tout this whole idea of scrounging the "waste stream" a little hard for my taste. They're advocating getting everything from furniture to clothes and more from trash left on the street to secondhand stores. Using every last scrap of food including sour milk for pancakes (although that's probably not that bad of an idea). Even scooping dried pigeon droppings under bridges for "the best garden fertilizer." This is where it starts to sound like work!)

Chapter: Recalibrate you're Your Senses: I like this one. The gist is similar to "hunger is the best spice," but, again, it's paying attention to what's in front of you and appreciating it.

They talk about a consumption rhythm of lean-lavish-lean, which strikes me as similar to the intermittent fasting idea. Or the sandwich eaten at the top on the mountain tastes so good!

(*Side note: I maintain I had the best soup and homemade bread *ever* after a four hour hike to the Tea House of the Six Glaciers near Banff, BC. In retrospect, expectations for the food

were low, it was a long hike, we were hungry... But lunch was amazing! Google it. Go there! Also, this whole topic reminds me of the text that talks about Epicurus, from time to time, would try to see how much food would be just enough to give him pleasure, I assume how much or how little would satisfy his hunger.)

There's also the appreciation of natural light when the electric goes out. Then an appreciation of electric when it comes back!!

"Frequently making frugal choices furnishes us with a more sensitive pleasure palate."

"Frugal hedonism furnishes us with an Elegant sufficiency of consumption."

(*Side note: Elegant. Where have I seen that before? Oh yeah: "There is an elegance in simplicity...")

"Be patient and gloat over every little increase in your capacity for pleasure."

Post by "Plantpierogi" of February 17, 2023 at 5:34 AM

The book seems right up my alley. I'll have to come back to this thread later if I get a chance to pick it up. 😊

Post by "Don" of February 17, 2023 at 6:45 AM

Exploring this topic a little and came across this:

[Robert Louis Stevenson, An Apology for Idlers](#)

Something else to read now! I've never heard of it before, but I'm intrigued... Especially by writing such as this:

Quote from Stevenson (emphasis added)

There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed{21} people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows into the country, or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random

provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk: they cannot be idle, their nature is not generous enough; and they pass those hours in a sort of coma, which are not dedicated to furious moiling in the gold-mill.

One of the meanings of ἀπονία aponia is "idleness, non-exertion; exemption from toil (of women)"

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

Plutarch uses it in this sense to describe Romulus and Remus:

Quote from Plutarch

They also applied themselves to generous occupations and pursuits, not esteeming sloth and idleness generous, but rather bodily exercise, hunting, running, driving off robbers, capturing thieves, and rescuing the oppressed from violence.

PS. And note this is "apology for idlers" as in the sense of defense, as in Plato's Apology and apologetics. Just wanted to say that explicitly.

Post by “Cassius” of February 17, 2023 at 6:54 AM

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

I'll be curious, Don, to find out whether 'frugal hedonism' ends up weighing in on the other stuff--like, you could be a frugal hedonist and still await your heavenly reward or be a frugal hedonist and still think the death of a child is part of a well-ordered cosmos.

Yesterday was busy for me and this sentence took a while to sink in.

Thinking further about it, I realize the implication:. The book title could have been the result of a phenomena that Norman Dewitt specifically mentions, that Epicurus is doomed to be anonymous when praised but named when condemned.

In other words, is the book a "conformist" approach in which someone decided to take everything they could from Epicurus that "sounds good" and strip from it everything that Lucretius' describes as "bitter?"

Given how important the "bitter" part is - in my view it is the real heart of the philosophy - if I woke up in a bad mood (which I didn't) I might be tempted to take a decidedly less charitable view of the book and its title.

Is the book attempting to do for Epicurus what the Modern Stoics do to Stoicism - strip it of integrity and add it to the modern list of anesthesia alternatives?

(Ha that last sentence sounds more harsh than I mean it to be. But the phenomena is a real one, and in the end it *isn't* one to be encouraged in either the Stoic or Epicurean worlds.)

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 17, 2023 at 10:31 AM

I am a little late in weighing in on this, but my first reaction is "be careful". And could there be something "stoic" about being frugal -- that it leads to the elevation of a type of virtue -- and the perfection of "frugality"?

The definition of frugality on the internet:

fru·gal·i·ty

/fr̄ō'galədē/

noun

the quality of being economical with money or food; thriftiness.

"he scorned the finer things in life and valued frugality and simplicity"

synonyms: thriftiness, carefulness, scrimping and saving, conservation, good management, caution, prudence, providence, canniness, abstemiousness, abstinence, austerity, asceticism, self-discipline, restraint, moderation, puritanism, monasticism, monkishness, miserliness, meanness, parsimoniousness, niggardliness, close-fistedness, tight-fistedness, tightness, stinginess, sparingness

Note that the definition includes "asceticism" as a synonym.

I would say that it is important to think of yourself as possessing prudence as a tool for making good choices, rather than being "frugal". There aren't any hard and fast rules for a pleasurable and pleasant life, and we judge each situation uniquely according to our given resources.

Looked up the definition of "prudence":

pru·dence

/ˈprʊd̩ns/

noun

the quality of being prudent; cautiousness.

"we need to exercise prudence in such important matters"

synonyms: wisdom, judgment, good judgment, judiciousness, sagacity, shrewdness, advisability, common sense, sense, caution, cautiousness, care, carefulness, canniness, chariness, wariness, circumspection, far-sightedness, foresight, forethought, discretion, thrift, thriftiness, providence, good management, careful budgeting, economy, frugality, abstemiousness, forehandedness, sparingness

LOL...frugality is a synonym 😄

Post by “Don” of February 17, 2023 at 11:22 AM

Maybe instead of "frugal hedonism" it's "prudent hedonism"? 🤔

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 17, 2023 at 11:28 AM

I'm really just a fan of our philosophy just being "Hedonism" (*sans adjective*). I want to **force** the **other** "Hedonists" to defend their "brand" of Hedonism with apologetic adjectives, like, "Unrestrained Hedonism", or "YOLO Hedonism".

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 17, 2023 at 1:03 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

I want to **force** the **other** "Hedonists" to defend their "brand" of Hedonism with apologetic adjectives, like, "Unrestrained Hedonism", or "YOLO Hedonism".

Looked up "YOLO" -- On Urban Dictionary, scroll down as you read a few of the entries, cause it is kind of funny:

[Urban Dictionary: Yolo](#)

Yolo means, 'You Only Live Once'.

www.urbandictionary.com

Thing is...that if "you only live once", then you shouldn't screw it up, and so this points to incorrect thinking regarding the best way to pursue pleasure -- and a disregard for the future and the long-term outcome.

Thinking of phrases...perhaps...Epicureanism = "Best Life Hedonism"

Post by "Don" of February 17, 2023 at 1:50 PM

In keeping with [Cassius](#) new thread:

Epicurus taught YOLO but not the YOLO That You Are Familiar With. 😄

Post by "Eikadistes" of February 17, 2023 at 2:34 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

In keeping with [Cassius](#) new thread:

Epicurus taught YOLO but not the YOLO That You Are Familiar With. 😄

I realized after typing "YOLO" that is is both thematically perfect, and also, connotatively antithetical to my message, so my bad for throwing out that adjective (*and I'll use this as an opportunity to further demonstrate that nouns are more powerful than adjectives, and a good noun should spare us the expense of having to buy an adjective*).

Post by “Cassius” of February 17, 2023 at 4:11 PM

Strictly speaking I don't have any problem with "you only live once" but I gather the connotations of recklessness are top in everyone's minds.

Post by “Don” of February 17, 2023 at 4:37 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Strictly speaking I don't have any problem with "you only live once" but I gather the connotations of recklessness are top in everyone's minds.

Prudent YOLO? Frugally YOLO? 😊

Post by “Cassius” of February 17, 2023 at 4:53 PM

Prudent YOLO I guess! It's strictly true that we only live once, so that isn't the issue.

And I think it's just clearly wrong to say the "longest life" per the letter to Menoecus.

So we're left with "the most pleasant in subjective terms" i guess!

So maybe even prudent YOLO does not get to the heart of it quickly - I best we can get more suggestions on the right modifier if we get creative - but it needs to be something about the "most pleasant"

Post by “Pacatus” of February 17, 2023 at 4:54 PM

For myself, I take the word frugal in a practical sense, not in any sense of a moral virtue in itself. (I have known people who are pretty severe “frugalists” and seem to take great self-righteous satisfaction in their “virtue” – though, of course, not all moral-virtue frugalists do

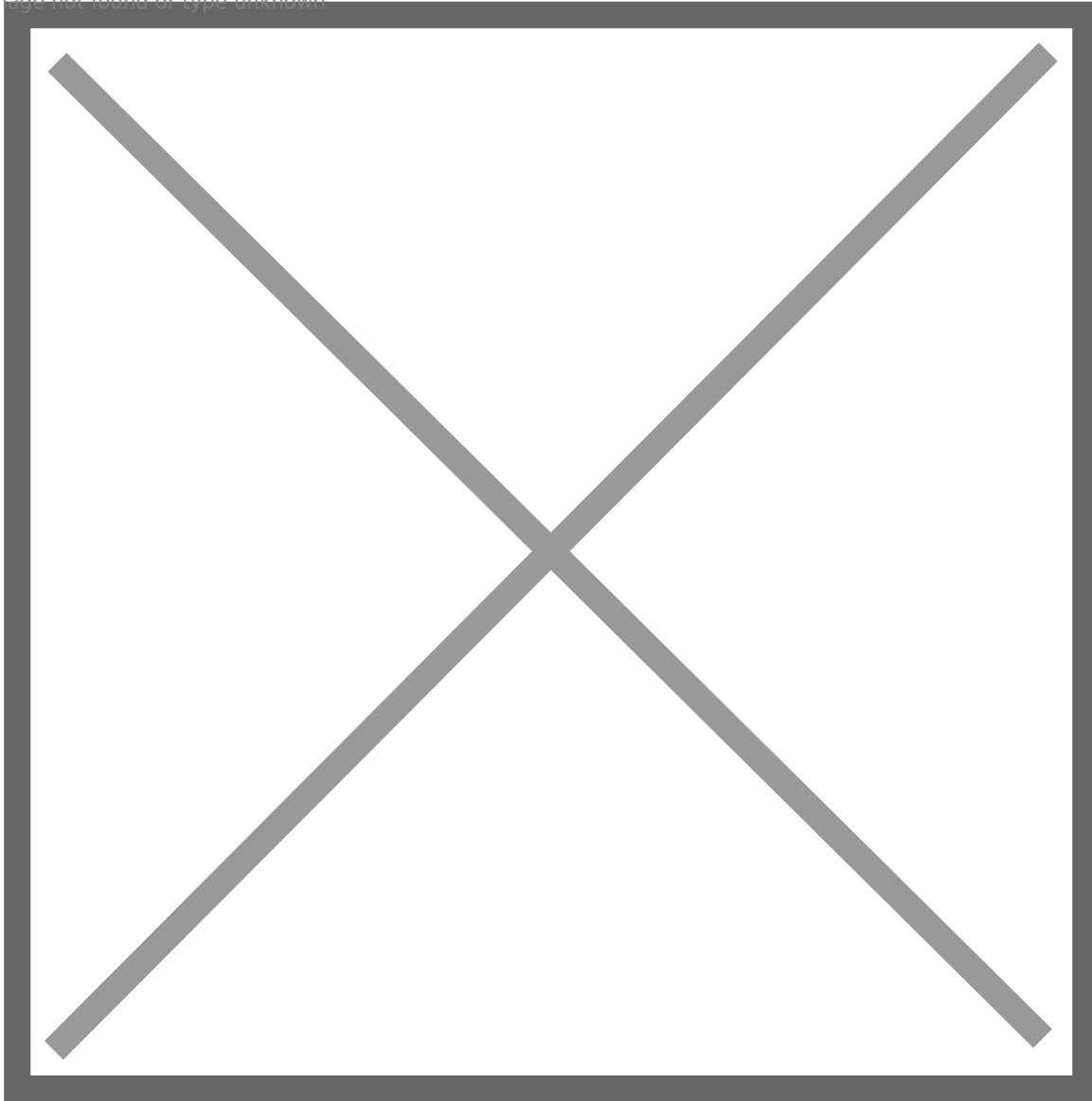
that.) I am occasionally extravagant, but not so much as in my youth. And I can find (even relish) elegance in simplicity.

With that said, I found this, which I thought might add a small nuance to the discussion:

[frugal \(adj.\)](#)

"economical in use," 1590s, from French frugal, from Latin frugalis, from undeclined adjective frugi "useful, proper, worthy, honest; temperate, economical," originally dative of frux (plural fruges) "fruit, produce," figuratively "value, result, success," from PIE root [*bhrug-](#) "to enjoy," with derivatives referring to agricultural products. Sense evolved in Latin from "useful" to "profitable" to "economical." Related: Frugally.

Image not found or type unknown



[frugal | Search Online Etymology Dictionary](#)

The online etymology dictionary (etymonline) is the internet's go-to source for quick and reliable accounts of the origin and history of English words,...

www.etymonline.com

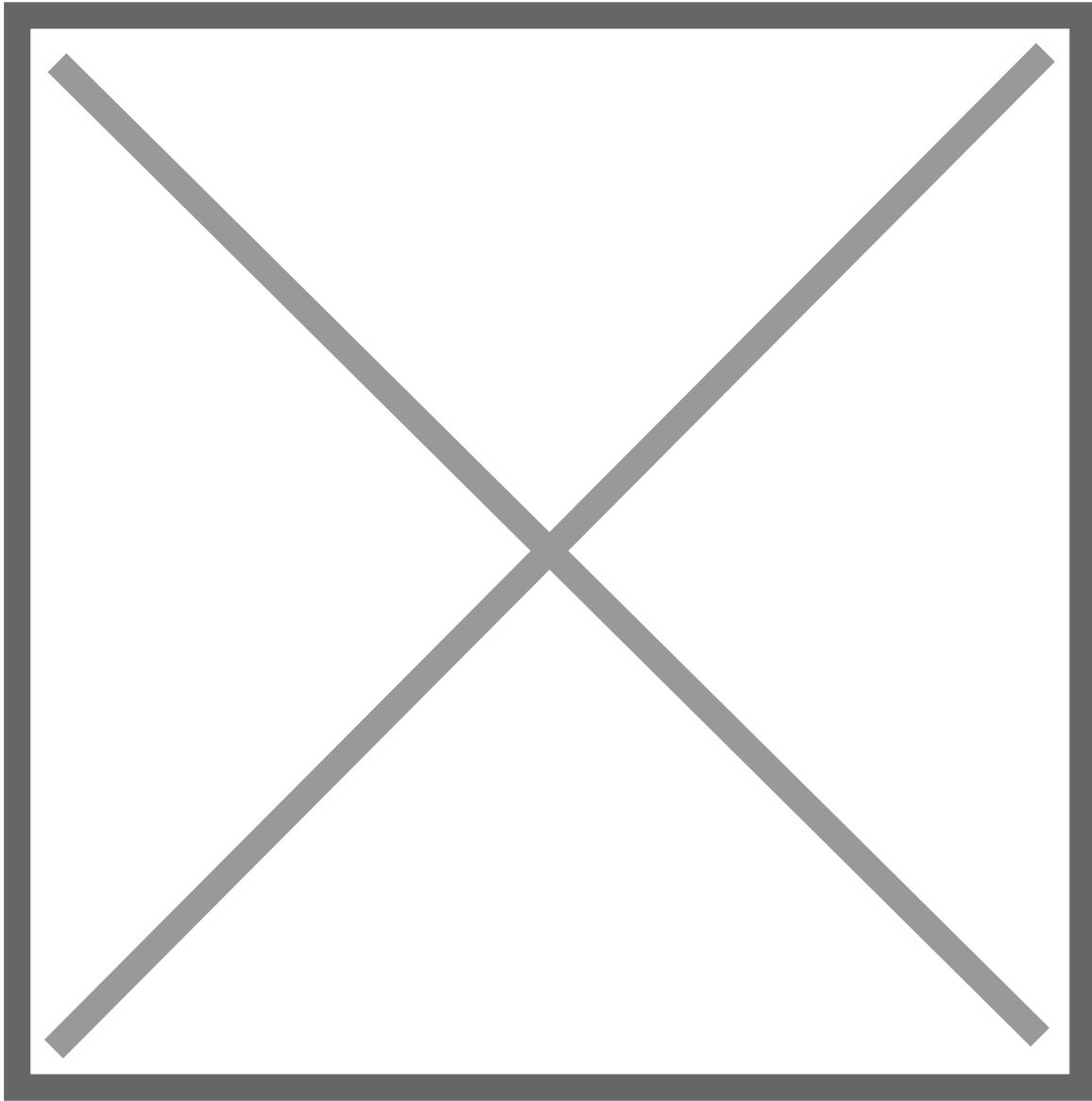
Post by “Don” of February 17, 2023 at 4:58 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

PIE root *bhrug- "to enjoy,"

Always a fan of etymonline and PIE, too!

Check out..



[*bhrug- | Meaning of root *bhrug- by etymonline](#)

*BHRUG- Meaning: "to enjoy," with derivatives referring to agricultural products. It forms all or part of: brook (v.) "to... See origin and meaning of *bhrug-.

www.etymonline.com

I *think* the bh- could also have evolved into an F or V sound, which is why there's frui... etc. in that entry.

Post by “Pacatus” of February 17, 2023 at 5:34 PM

[Don](#)

The Wiktionary entry for the Latin “frux” traces it to the PIE *b^hruHg-:

Etymology[[edit](#)]

From [Proto-Italic *frūks](#), from [Proto-Indo-European *b^hruHg-](#) (“fruit”).

frūx f (genitive [frūgis](#)); [third declension](#)

[produce](#), [crop](#), [fruit](#)

(in the [plural](#)) [supplies](#)

([figuratively](#)) [fruit](#), [result](#), [success](#)

[frux - Wiktionary](#)

+++++

The Wiktionary entry for *b^hruHg also gives this definition: “to make use of; have enjoyment of”. Which agrees with Etymonline.

[Reconstruction:Proto-Indo-European/b^hruHg- - Wiktionary](#)

Post by “Don” of February 17, 2023 at 5:48 PM

Sort of gives a whole deeper context to "Pluck the day" Carpe diem.

Post by “Pacatus” of February 17, 2023 at 5:50 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Sort of gives a whole deeper context to "Pluck the day" Carpe diem.

"pluck the frux"? 😊

Post by “Joshua” of February 17, 2023 at 6:32 PM

The root of one of my favorite words--*usufructuary*.

Quote from Edward Abbey

Within this vast perimeter, in the middle ground and foreground of the picture, a rather personal demesne, are the 33,000 acres of Arches National Monument of which I am now sole inhabitant, usufructuary, observer and custodian.

Post by “Cassius” of February 17, 2023 at 7:08 PM

And as used by Thomas Jefferson -

[The Earth Belongs in Usufruct to the Living | The Papers of Thomas Jefferson](#)

To James Madison Paris, Sep. 6, 1789

DEAR SIR,

-- I sit down to write to you without knowing by what occasion I shall send my letter. I do it because a subject comes into my head which I would wish to develope a little more than is practicable in the hurry of the moment of making up general despatches.



The question Whether one generation of men has a right to bind another, seems never to have been started either on this or our side of the water. Yet it is a question of such consequences as not only to merit decision, but place also, among the fundamental principles of every government. The course of reflection in which we are immersed here on the elementary principles of society has presented this question to my mind; and that no such obligation can be transmitted I think very capable of proof. I set out on this ground which I suppose to be self evident, "that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living;" that the dead have neither powers nor rights over it. The portion occupied by an individual ceases to be his when himself ceases to be, and reverts to the society. If the society has formed no rules for the appropriation

Post by “Little Rocker” of February 17, 2023 at 8:01 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Even scooping dried pigeon droppings under bridges for "the best garden fertilizer."
This is where it starts to sound like work!

I'm wondering how many people read the book and say, 'you know, this other advice I could take or leave, but scavenging pigeon droppings is a great idea!'

Post by “Don” of February 17, 2023 at 9:40 PM

I hinted at this but let's make it explicit. The Art of Frugal Hedonism specifically mentions Epicurus, but I had't reached those sections yet. Let's jump ahead, shall we...

"The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus taught that three things are essential for a happy life: friendship, freedom, and time for contemplation."

Caption to a photo: "Bar of Frugal Legends: Robinson Crusoe, Epicurus, Ernest Shackleton, and Miss Honey. Now, who's buying the first round?"

In chapter 30: People who need people are the luckiest people in the world:

"The truth about Epicurus: Epicurus was an ancient Greek philosopher who lived from 341 to 270 BC. For most people, his name carries with it the stink of rich cheeses, the sloshing of wine pitchers, and a general association with luxuriant gourmandising.

"Records tell us that he was indeed partial to a spot of cheese, and was a great advocate for taking full pleasure in the sensual world, but in a manner far removed from the excessive indulgence suggested by his modern reputation. In fact, he firmly believed that simple meals provided as much joy as opulent ones, and saw extravagant desire as a surefire happiness-squisher: 'Do no spoil what you have by desiring what you have not.'

"Companionship on the other hand, he regarded as vital: 'Of all the things which wisdom provides to make us entirely happy, much the greatest is the possession of friendship.' Epicurus thought people should never eat alone, and should live close to a circle of friends who would nourish each other's minds, help each other in daily life, and support each other in times of struggle. He candidly described friendship as something which starts from a point of need, or from the hope of mutual benefit, but then grows into sheer pleasure at having the other person in one's life. He also viewed friendship *without* some element of mutual need as being somewhat vacuous.

"Not one for merely bandying lofty ideas around, Epicurus created The Garden, a sanctuary outside Athens where those interested in studying his philosophy (including women -- what would the neighbors say!) could live together by the Epicurean principles. Following his dreams obviously worked out well for him, as despite developing nasty kidney stones that made urination impossible in his old age, he apparently never complained about his suffering, and even wrote a letter to a friend on his last day on earth that described his mental state as 'blissful.'"

Under an image of one of the busts is the caption:

"Come on, look at those svelte cheekbones and tell us this wasn't a man who needed nothing more than some watered wine and barley cakes to have a good time."

Thoughts:

This all is no where near as stereotyped or ascetic as I've read in other places, including academic papers.

I'm not sure where they got the three things, but I don't necessarily disagree. The "freedom" is implied by his setting his Garden outside the city walls of Athens and not teaching in public. Time for contemplation is supported by the "wise one enjoys contemplation more than others" and other similar textual references including "mediate on these day and night with a friend."

I think they may misunderstand his position with the "extravagant desire as a surefire happiness-squisher." However, they did say *desires* here and not pleasures, and as [Godfrey](#) has pointed out, desires and pleasures are NOT the same thing. We also have Dr. Austin's book to thank for a much better explanation of "extravagant" pleasures.

The picture caption with the "watered wine and barley cakes" is fine by me. The Greeks *did* water their wine, and Epicurus DID eat barley cakes. He also experimented with - oh, let's just call it intermittent fasting because that's what it was... but ****Experimented**** not lived that ascetically all the time. I'm still trying to bake edible barley cakes myself, but I don't use MY experiments as good examples of what Epicurus ate.

All in all, better than I hoped for. Not perfect by any means, but someone reading this would come away with a "better" perspective on Epicurus than most places!

Post by “Godfrey” of February 18, 2023 at 12:40 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

I think they may misunderstand his position with the "extravagant desire as a surefire happiness-squisher."

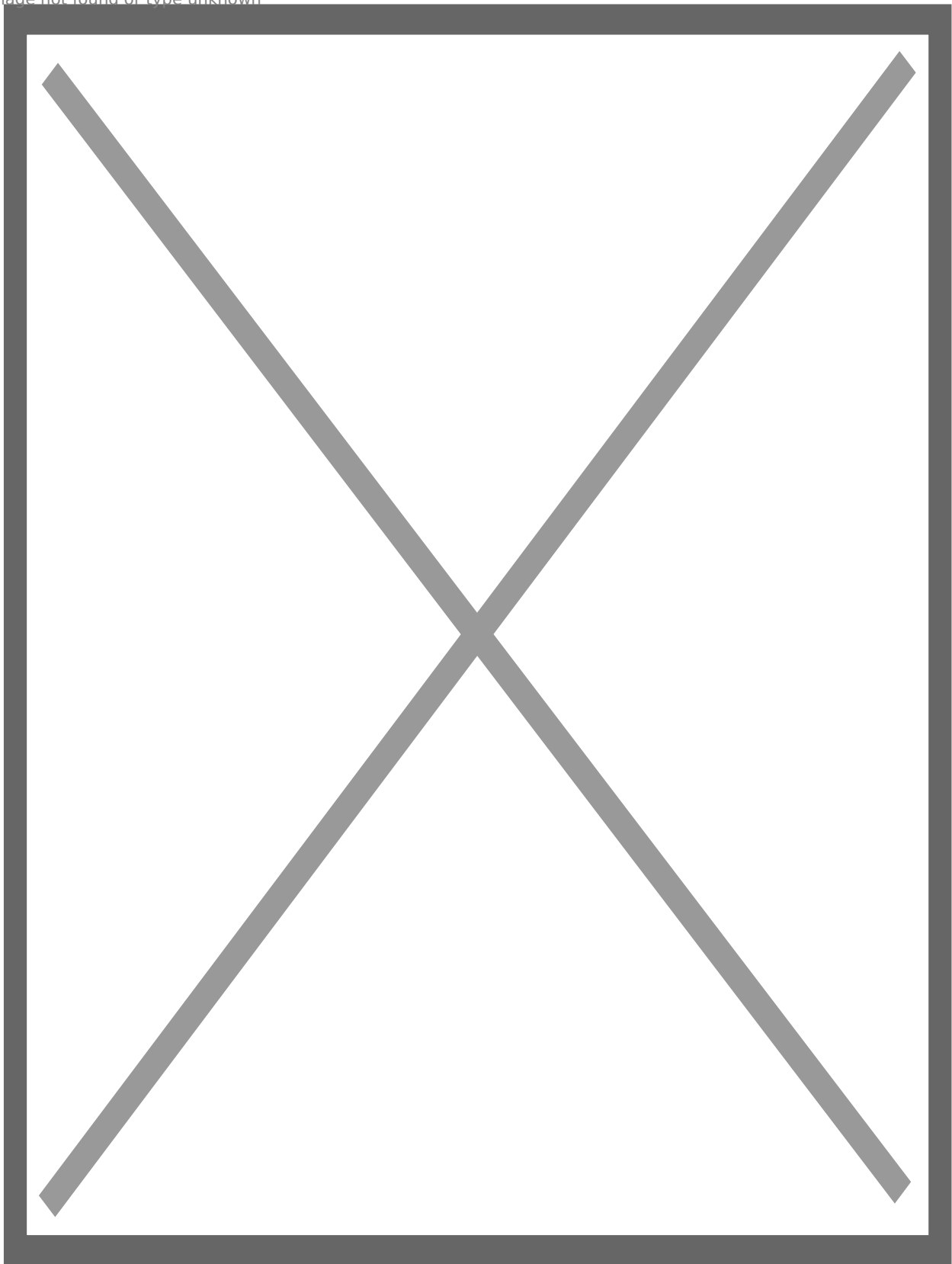
They probably haven't read [Living for Pleasure](#) yet.... Although I quite like the use of the term "extravagant desires" in that book, this does point out the problem with that description. For now I would give these authors the benefit of the doubt and assume that they're using "extravagant" to describe unnecessary desires.

And yes, it's nice to see that they understand the difference between desires and pleasures 😊

Post by “Godfrey” of February 18, 2023 at 12:54 AM

Speaking of desires, I found this blog post to have some good insights on the subject:

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[Why wanting less doesn't always mean more joy - The Aesthetics of Joy by Ingrid Fetell Lee](#)

We're often told that wanting less is the key to happiness, but suppressing our desires can lead us to shrink our lives, play small, and accept less than we...

aestheticsofjoy.com

There seems to be something in the air these days: people are discovering the benefits of the Epicurean life, some perhaps through studying Epicurus, and some perhaps by reasoning it out on their own. Not all are presenting a complete worldview as did Epicurus, but it does seem to be a trend that's heading in a good direction.

Post by “Don” of February 18, 2023 at 6:40 AM

[Godfrey](#) : Changed my emoji on your article find from a "thanks" to a "heart"! I'm curious to explore that blog more.

And I agree with your "something if the air these days." I'm torn on my reaction to all of this. Rucker, positive psychology, frugal hedonists, happiness research, and on and on all seem to be... Let's call it touching different pieces of the Elephant of Epicurean Philosophy and coming away with helpful lessons but missing the bigger coherent worldview.

It seems to me that the blog's author's conclusion is Epicurean: learn to want better. The last 4 paragraphs are great! I think Buddhists would say "to want less, to control and tamp down our desires" is the right track. But I am convinced Epicurus didn't and wouldn't advocate "a state of over-consuming, goal-oriented pursuit, never able to enjoy anything." However, I think he'd agree with the author that desires are

Quote from from blog

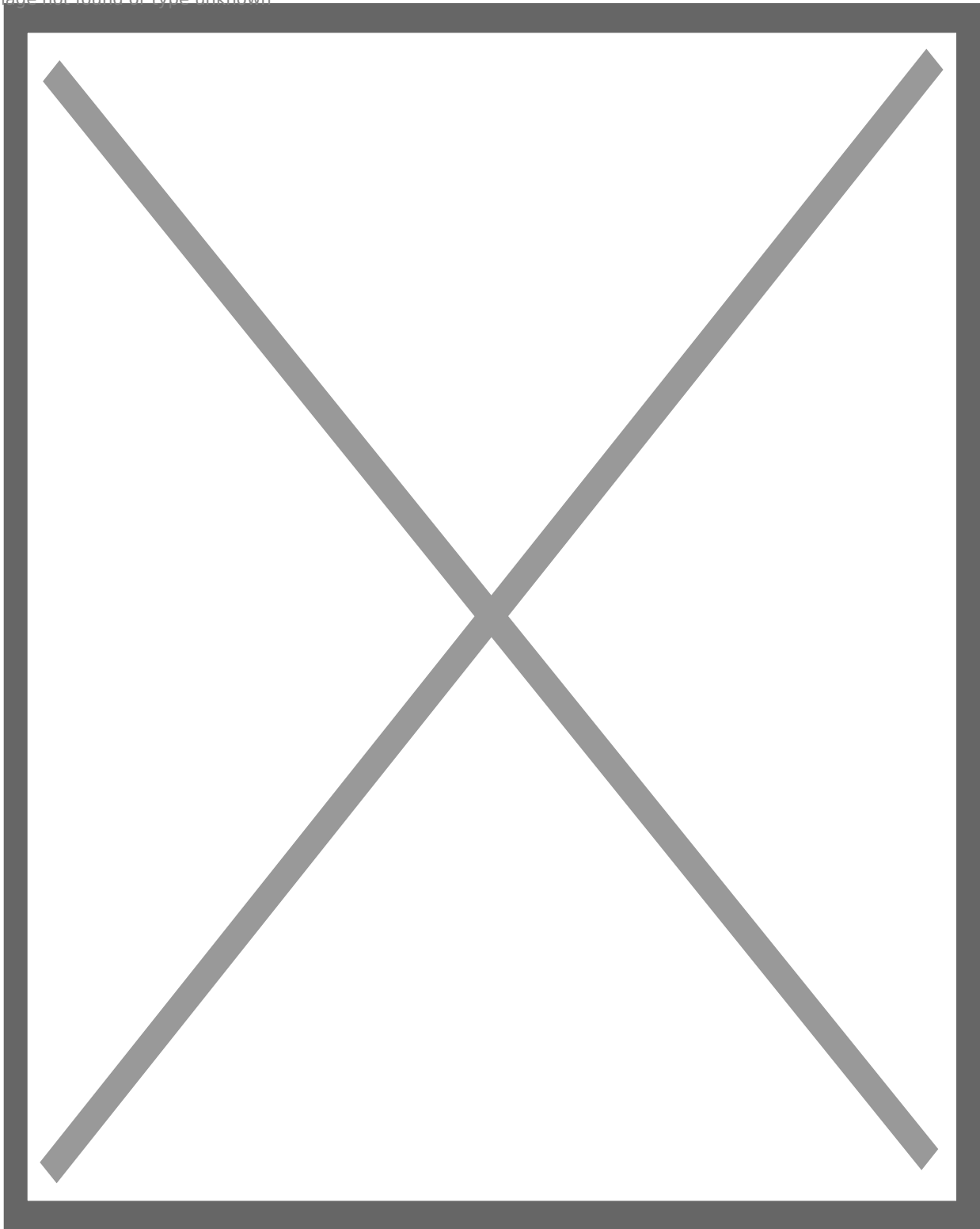
"more nuanced. It's not that wanting is bad, but that so many of us live our lives trying to satisfy the wants of others without really understanding what we want for ourselves. We pursue accolades to satisfy the wants of our parents, we acquire material things that to fix what marketers have told us is "wanting" in us.... Maybe we accept the gratification of a high-status job because we learned approval is more attainable than unconditional love.

The whole idea of "wanting better" seems an apt metaphor for Epicurus's prudent perspective on living for pleasure.

Post by “Don” of February 18, 2023 at 6:56 AM

This one seems pretty good, too:

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[How to cultivate an abundance mindset - The Aesthetics of Joy by Ingrid Fetell Lee](#)

Overcoming a scarcity mindset isn't easy, but these 6 tips can help you cultivate the an abundance mindset and see the world as generous and full of...
aestheticsofjoy.com

Especially in light of the "wealth of nature" thread we had recently:

Quote from blog

Wealth is having enough resources (money, health, connections, etc.) to live the life you want to live.

Post by “Cassius” of February 18, 2023 at 7:23 AM

I think I recently quipped that just because the Stoics say it doesn't make it necessarily wrong. And the same would go for the Buddhists. But:

[Quote from Don](#)

The last 4 paragraphs are great! I think Buddhists would say "to want less, to control and tamp down our desires" is the right track

The right track to what?

It begins to become more apparent how phrasing things in terms of "frugal hedonism" and "abundance" - rather than unmodified "pleasure" or the absence of reference to supernatural forces or life after death can end up leading to both very divergent goals and paths. It's very easy to place modifier words on pleasure that change the focus entirely. I could easily imagine "responsible pleasure" or "noble pleasure" would suit the Stoics.

I think Diogenes of Oinoanda would have shouted at least as much at the Buddhists as he would at the Stoics, and very possibly more loudly.

Sounds like the book has food for thought for living more self-sufficiently but contains much peril for those who are not clear about why they might want to do so.

Post by “Don” of February 18, 2023 at 7:29 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The right track to what?

Just to be clear, I'm saying the Buddhists are wrong too. They would say tamping down desires is the right track.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

peril for those who are not clear about why they might want to do so.

Agreed. Even though I may not agree with the technical translation, I still agree with the sentiment of "there's a limit to frugality..."

Post by "Cassius" of February 18, 2023 at 7:32 AM

I just woke up and had to insert my normal sourness for Buddhism. :-). I knew you were fine yourself. Carry on! (But not necessarily calmly) 😊

Post by "Kalosyni" of February 18, 2023 at 8:30 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The right track to what?

Here in this thread I want to point out an example of the complexity (and difficulty) of thought and language.

[Quote from Don](#)

I think Buddhists would say "to want less, to control and tamp down our desires" is the right track.

And Don has explained:

[Quote from Don](#)

Just to be clear, I'm saying the Buddhists are wrong too. They would say tamping down desires is the right track.

But maybe Cassius was asking this:

There is the question of the **goal**: "the right track to what?"

Just like there is the idea within religion of [Perennial philosophy](#), so to we need to watch out for some like this when comparing Epicureanism to other philosophies (such as the philosophy of Buddhism). I once read a very good explanation about why the belief in "perennial philosophy" is incorrect -- since the end goal of each religion is actually slightly different.

Post by "Cassius" of February 18, 2023 at 8:44 AM

As to "perennial philosophy" - a term new to me - Yikes!!!

Post by "Little Rocker" of February 18, 2023 at 9:12 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Just like there is the idea within religion of Perennial philosophy, so to we need to watch out for some like this when comparing Epicureanism to other philosophies (such as the philosophy of Buddhism). I once read a very good explanation about why the belief in "perennial philosophy" is incorrect -- since the end goal of each religion is actually slightly different.

Like Cassius, this is a new term to me and it's like a penny dropped that helped me make some connections about the motives behind some of the 'wisdom' related organization/podcasts out there that seem to give off some vaguely religious vibes. For example, [this guy](#).

Post by "Don" of February 18, 2023 at 9:35 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

As to "perennial philosophy" - a term new to me - Yikes!!!

It's a new term to me too, but I used to be an advocate for the "different paths up the same mountain" thing. There are obviously *experiences* that may be common by virtue of being humans and animals and part of the natural world. But the *interpretation* of those experiences - those are probably different mountains altogether.

Oh, and they are NOT supernatural experiences! They may feel that way, but they're NOT evidence of mystical, supernatural states or dimensions. Just had to add that in.

Oddly enough, it was the Dalai Lama himself that turned me to exploring Western philosophy:

Quote from Dalai Lama

I always tell my Western friends that it is best to keep your own tradition. Changing religion is not easy and sometimes causes confusion. You must value your tradition and honor your own religion.

I've seen that "your own religion" part expanded to mean Western traditions and philosophy. So, even he isn't a proponent of the perennial philosophy it seems.

Post by “Cassius” of February 18, 2023 at 11:34 AM

Given the references at wikipedia include Aldous Huxley and other pretty recognizable names which makes it sound like this is a term in more common use than those of us here (me anyway!) seem to realize, sounds like Kalosyni wins the educational post prize for the day!

Post by “Pacatus” of February 18, 2023 at 6:45 PM

Forgive this over-long, rambling post. This is all a general synopsis of past studies (of which much is forgotten) -

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Years ago I spent a good deal of time studying (in my own schlocky way) various renditions and interpretations of the perennial philosophy (taken broadly). There really are versions of it within most religions (Advaita Vedanta in Hinduism; Kabbalistic theology, as partially reflected in the Talmuds and Midrash, as well as the Zohar, in Judaism; the Laoist mainstream of Taoism, etc.) – albeit with different expressions (ice cream with different flavors: who wants to argue over whether chocolate or vanilla is “the right one”™?). Those versions are not necessarily considered “orthodox” to religious or philosophical sectarians.

A general perennialist would argue that emphasizing the differences is ultimately delusional (sectarianism is illusion). The “orthodox” sectarians would call the perennialists heretics.

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The foundation (again broadly) is that there is some universal “ground of being” or “field of being” (supernatural or natural) from which every individual manifestation arises, of which they are, and to which they all return – generally relinquishing whatever existential individualism one might have enjoyed during the journey.*

I don’t know if Advaita Vedanta is the oldest expression, but the “mahavakyas” of the Upanishads are probably generally representative (where “Brahman” is that underlying universal ground/field):

Sarvam khalvidam brahma – All this is Brahman.

Ayam atma brahma – This very self (that I am) is Brahman.

Tat tvam asi – That (Brahman) thou art.

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With that, I’ll truncate this brief 😊 recollection with a possible Epicurean spin (that hopefully does not stray into any Platonic idealism or Stoicism): If the whole field of our existence is defined by atoms and void, then we are formed of those atoms, and when we die, they are simply dispersed into that field. And we – as individual existences – are simply gone: nothing to fear.

And if the “field” is just atoms and void (or whatever analogues might be dominant in current physics), does the notion of a universal field (or ground) become just a metaphor** that might well be useful – as long as it is not reified into some “thing-in-itself” substance? [I think that would be my position.]

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* I once wrote a brief poem on this:

How tragic for the single flame to fear

annihilation in the larger fire

or water-drop to be afraid to fall

again into the vastness of the sea.

** Years ago I read a book that I no longer have, called *The Metaphors We Live By*. The thesis was that we often - likely unreflectively - allow our behavior to be guided by metaphors at least as much as reasoned analysis. Metaphors such as: *tempus fugit*; *carpe diem*; a stitch in time, etc.