

# Welcome Creative Air!

Post by "Cassius" of May 1, 2023 at 3:34 PM

Welcome [Creative Air](#) !

**Note: In order to minimize spam registrations, all new registrants must respond in this thread to this welcome message within 72 hours of its**

**posting, or their account is subject to deletion. All that is required is a "Hello!" but of course we hope you will introduce yourself -- tell us a little about yourself and what prompted your interest in Epicureanism -- and/or post a question.**

This forum is the place for students of Epicurus to coordinate their studies and work together to promote the philosophy of Epicurus. Please remember that all posting here is subject to our [Community Standards / Rules of the Forum](#) our [Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean](#) and our [Posting Policy](#) statements and [associated posts](#).

Please understand that the leaders of this forum are well aware that many fans of Epicurus may have sincerely-held views of what Epicurus taught that are incompatible with the purposes and standards of this forum. This forum is dedicated exclusively to the study and support of people who are committed to classical Epicurean views. As a result, this forum is not for people who seek to mix and match some Epicurean views with positions that are inherently inconsistent with the core teachings of Epicurus.

All of us who are here have arrived at our respect for Epicurus after long journeys through other philosophies, and we do not demand of others what we were not able to do ourselves. Epicurean philosophy is very different from other viewpoints, and it takes time to understand how deep those differences really are. That's why we have membership levels here at the forum which allow for new participants to discuss and develop their own learning, but it's also why we have standards that will lead in some cases to arguments being limited, and even participants being removed, when the purposes of the community require it. Epicurean philosophy is not inherently democratic, or committed to unlimited free speech, or devoted to any other form of organization other than the pursuit by our community of happy living through the principles of Epicurean philosophy.

One way you can be most assured of your time here being productive is to tell us a little about yourself and personal your background in reading Epicurean texts. It would also be helpful if you could tell us how you found this forum, and any particular areas of interest that you have which would help us make sure that your questions and thoughts are addressed.

In that regard we have found over the years that there are a number of key texts and references which most all serious students of Epicurus will want to read and evaluate for themselves. Those include the following.

1. ["Epicurus and His Philosophy"](#) by Norman DeWitt
2. [The Biography of Epicurus by Diogenes Laertius.](#) This includes the surviving letters of Epicurus, including those to [Herodotus](#), [Pythocles](#), and [Menoceus](#).
3. ["On The Nature of Things"](#) - by Lucretius (a poetic abridgement of Epicurus' "On Nature")
4. ["Epicurus on Pleasure"](#) - By Boris [Nikolsky](#)
5. The chapters on Epicurus in [Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks On Pleasure."](#)
6. [Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section](#)
7. [Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section](#)
8. The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda - [Martin Ferguson Smith translation](#)
9. [A Few Days In Athens" - Frances Wright](#)
10. Lucian Core Texts on Epicurus: (1) [Alexander the Oracle-Monger](#), (2) [Hermodotimus](#)
11. [Philodemus "On Methods of Inference"](#) (De Lacy version, including his appendix on relationship of Epicurean canon to Aristotle and other Greeks)
12. "The Greeks on Pleasure" -Gosling & Taylor Sections on Epicurus, especially the [section on katastematic and kinetic pleasure](#) which explains why ultimately this distinction was not of great significance to Epicurus.

It is by no means essential or required that you have read these texts before participating in the forum, but your understanding of Epicurus will be much enhanced the more of these you have read. Feel free to join in on one or more of our conversation threads under various topics found throughout the forum, where you can to ask questions or to add in any of your insights as you study the Epicurean philosophy.

And time has also indicated to us that if you can find the time to read one book which will best explain [classical Epicurean philosophy](#), as opposed to most modern "eclectic" interpretations of Epicurus, that book is Norman DeWitt's ***Epicurus And His Philosophy.***

(If you have any questions regarding the usage of the forum or finding info, please post any questions in this thread).

***Welcome to the forum!***

# Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean

1. Not "flourishing," "human potential," "self-actualization," or "meaningfulness," but happiness grounded in the feeling of pleasure.
2. Not "absence of pain" as a full statement of the goal of life, but "the Feelings are two, pleasure and pain" and "Pleasure is the beginning and the end of a happy life."
3. Not virtue for the sake of virtue, but virtue as instrumental for the attainment of pleasure.
4. Not "the greatest good for the greatest number," but "Every desire must be confronted with this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished and what if it is not?"
5. Not "humanism," "transhumanism," "individualism," "collectivism," "egoism," "altruism," "social progress," "Marxism," "democracy," "tyranny," or any "one size fits all" political ideal of any kind, but social structure based on friendship which "is formed and maintained by means of a community of life among those who have reached the fullness of pleasure."
6. Not "hard determinism," but "some things happen from necessity, some from chance, and others through our own choice."
7. Not "supernaturalism," but "materialism."
8. Not "supernatural gods," or "life after death," but confidence in a fully material universe and "for those men for whom wisdom is possible, and who do seek it, such men may truly live as gods."
9. Not only "short term hedonism," but "it is to continuous pleasures that I invite you."
10. Not "rationalism," but "all reason is dependent upon sensations."
11. Not fearful of death nor careless of losing life, but valuing life for the opportunity of pleasure it brings.

## Our Posting Policy At EpicureanFriends.com:

### "No Partisan Politics," "No Supernatural Religion," and "No Absolute Virtue"

This forum is dedicated to promoting the philosophy of Epicurus, and not to any partisan political positions whether "left", "right", or "center". The task of rediscovering Epicurean philosophy requires that such discussions be held elsewhere. Posts violating this rule are subject to removal.



Epicurean philosophy firmly rejects the viewpoint that there are any supernatural forces or absolute virtues or Platonic ideals of any kind. Argument which is based on supernatural claims, or "absolute" virtues or ideals of any kind, are in violation of this rule and subject to removal.

**There are no  
supernatural  
gods**



**There is  
no life  
after death**

**All good  
and evil exists  
in sensation**

**Pleasure is  
the beginning  
and the end of  
the blessed life**

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### **Post by “Creative Air” of May 2, 2023 at 4:53 AM**

Hello! I'm David. This is a (very) long introduction about my journey to Epicureanism and why.

I first came across Epicureanism over 20 years ago as I had become disillusioned with Christianity, which was something I was never fully convinced by anyway. I sought, like many when they leave their first religion, a replacement life philosophy or religion to give myself the meaning that I felt I had lost, and Epicureanism along with Stoicism were amongst those which I researched.

Unfortunately, I got sucked into eastern philosophies/religions and became a Buddhist for quite a while as this seemed the most sensible and least supernatural option. But, just like Christianity, I found out that it required belief/faith in supernatural mechanisms such as rebirth and Karma without empirical evidence, which I could never fully bring myself to believe. So, like more Secular Buddhists, I used sophistry, redefinition of terminology, and ignoring of certain teachings, in continuing to delude myself that this wasn't the case.

Once I accepted that I could no longer be a Buddhist and be intellectually honest, I fell onto what I thought was the nearest analogue in the western traditions - Stoicism. Once there I tried to apply the teachings to my own life, and it lead me to feeling depressed and stressed as I was

tyrannising my self. Also, just like Christianity and Buddhism before, it required that I take Virtue (there doesn't seem to be a clear consensus on what it is) as an objective good and Vice as an objective bad.

I learned that the Stoics of the early and middle Stoa grounded Virtue and Vice in their physics: the Universe/Nature was a complete system of which we were parts. Therefore to act in harmony with the system was Virtue and to not act in harmony/disharmony was Vice. An analogy can be made by using the example of the (organic) body and it's cells. If the cells act in harmony with the body they can be considered "good" cells as they benefit and strengthen the body as a whole. Cells that act in disharmony, or do their own thing at the expense of the body, can be considered "bad" or "cancerous". Whilst I can understand this logic, the early to middle Stoics who believed in it had no empirical evidence that this was the case, and I think that Nietzsche was right in his criticism of Stoicism for acting in accordance with whatever concept they projected on to Nature as being what it is, rather than acting according to actual Nature.

The modern Stoics are perhaps even worse, abandoning or at least being agnostic towards this physics as a way of grounding their ethics. Instead it is just taken on faith that Virtue is an objective good and Vice an objective bad, and then using the argument from authority (usually Roman Stoics from the late Stoa, who also abandoned Stoic physics in favour of a focus on ethics, but also modern war heroes such as Admiral Stockdale or historical figures such as Nelson Mandela) to give it an air of legitimacy to make up for a lack of objective grounding. Either that or applying Aristotelian essentialism where Virtue is acting in accordance with human nature and Vice is acting against human nature (that of being rational and social. But what about emotion, is that not human nature too?). Again, this falls foul of Nietzsche's criticism of projecting beliefs/abstract notions on to Nature, rather than accepting Nature as it is.

So, I abandoned Stoicism also. This was when I revisited Epicureanism, something I knew initially from research years ago and from subsequent diatribes from the Stoic community. I had gotten fed up with my "spiritual" search and realised that I only had one life, this one. I wasn't going to waste it anymore following such sour and austere philosophies. I decided to abandon such intellectual pretense and focus on what matters from a pre-conceptual standpoint. And that was Pleasure and Pain. These were the only things that mattered as they were inherent in us from birth and existed in every sentient (as in being able to feel) being, before any conceptualisation. It was and is something I can point to as universal in the absence of an external objectively grounded ethics/morality. Something that is inherently true regardless of how I felt or thought about it.

Of course, at first I had wrong ideas about Epicurus' teachings, but through further research including on here, my life has transformed and I have become happier and more peaceful. And I'm grateful to all of you as well as the founder and other Epicureans. I realised, for example, that my definition of pleasure and that of modern society is very restrictive - basically sex, drugs and rock n roll. So I expanded this definition to seek pleasure come from all possible sources: whether viewing a beautiful sunset, hearing a baby giggle, or remembering an act of kindness

or friendship. I also realised that all pleasure is good and all pain is bad, that there isn't a hierarchy of pleasures, but that some pleasures are worthwhile pursuing and others aren't (they produce pains and disturbances greater than the pleasure they produce). And also that all beings, people included, have pleasure and pain as the ultimate basis of their decision making, even if they may deny it using sophistry.

Among the main objectors to this view of pleasure are the "spiritually" or religiously inclined (at least in theory), those committed to virtue/duty ethics (the aforementioned Stoics), and those who believe in "self sacrifice" and heroism. These conveniently forget that what they ultimately want is a form of reward in terms of a pleasant outcome or avoidance of punishment in the form of a painful outcome. For the spiritual or religious and also for those who follow virtue ethics, this consists either of a more pleasant afterlife/rebirth (in a heavenly realm, or reuniting with the godhead, which is associated with bliss) or the attainment of ultimate peace of mind in this life (apatheia/Ataraxia, Nirvana). Or they want to avoid a hellish afterlife/rebirth or avoid a distressed mind in this life. If this was not the case, or the traditions couldn't sell it, I doubt many of these people would continue these practices. Spiritual attainment is a form of refined pleasure but not discussed as such.

What is taken as evidence of a fatal blow to hedonism, whether of the Cyrenaic (sensual pleasures better than mental pleasures) or Epicurean variety, is that of human self sacrifice or heroism. But, I think this view undervalues the impact of mental pain due to our evolved sense of conscience/empathy. We identify with other people, whether relatives or friends or social groups (including communities, religious and non-religious, and nations) and we have sympathetic joy when beneficial things happen to them, and sympathetic distress when harmful things happen to them. This also applies to perceived or theoretical benefits/harms. A soldier wants to protect his community from harm and the possibility of harm pains him/her to the point they are willing to put themselves in harms way or even the possibility of death to alleviate it. Also, the sense of pride in doing so brings them pleasure.

A personal example would be me running in front of a car to save my nephew or niece. People may say me doing so would be heroic but in reality I would do it because seeing them harmed or killed pains me so much emotionally that I would rather be harmed/killed myself. I want to see them free from harm and happy. Their being so alleviates me of pain and gives me pleasure, not because of morality but my naturally evolved sense of empathy. Virtue exists in service of pleasure and against pain and is not a good in and of itself. This sense of empathy, along with the knowledge of the security and protection a friendship group gives us that we may lose through untrustworthy/harmful behaviour, and the fear of being detected if we do so, prevents what people would usually call unethical behaviour. And not getting swept up in fears, and unnatural and unnecessary desires, means that we would not have reason to act in those ways anyway, and so we have no need of morality - only of a social contract.

Discovering this philosophy has changed my life for the better, and I welcome Frank criticism of my views (as I still probably have non Epicurean/neo Epicurean beliefs that I'm unaware of and

need pointing out to me).

Apologies for the long introduction and again I'm grateful for what all of you do here and the knowledge you impart to continue the Epicurean tradition. Thanks!

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### **Post by “Don” of May 2, 2023 at 6:46 AM**

#### [Quote from Creative Air](#)

Apologies for the long introduction and again I'm grateful for what all of you do here and the knowledge you impart to continue the Epicurean tradition. Thanks!

Thank you! for the heartfelt introduction to yourself and your path. That is an excellent and eloquent first post. No apologies necessary at all for the length! 😊 I enjoyed reading it, and you'll find a number of us here with similar backstories.

Welcome to our little virtual Garden! Salve! Χαίρε!

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of May 2, 2023 at 7:42 AM**

[Creative Air](#) Welcome to the forum! And thanks for telling us about your background!

#### [Quote from Creative Air](#)

Discovering this philosophy has changed my life for the better

Yes! And it has for me too!

#### [Quote from Creative Air](#)

I'm grateful for what all of you do here and the knowledge you impart to continue the Epicurean tradition. Thanks!

Thanks and you're welcome...and of course we do it for the pleasure it brings! 😊

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### **Post by “Cassius” of May 2, 2023 at 7:46 AM**

For the moment just want to say this is one of the most eloquent and encouraging posts from a new participant I think I've ever seen. Welcome!

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### **Post by “Creative Air” of May 2, 2023 at 3:33 PM**

Thank you all for your warm introductions. I'm an English (and Spanish) teacher so I tend to write a lot!

It's a pleasure to be part of the virtual garden with you all 😊

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### **Post by “Martin” of May 8, 2023 at 5:56 AM**

Welcome Creative Air!

Your views seem to match ours already very well. Sorry that I found no detail to apply frank criticism to.