

Questions for Emily Austin - "Living for Pleasure"

Zoom Meeting June 4

Post by "Kalosyni" of May 26, 2023 at 4:15 PM

Let's use this thread to accumulate questions for Emily Austin. Everyone can post their questions here in this thread, and then as we go along we will update this post with the best questions and use it as a guide at the meeting.

Questions for Dr. Emily Austin: We'll be coming from a slightly different vantage point compared to our previous interview on the Lucretius Today Podcast. We'd like to gear this interview for folks who have read the book and have a basic grasp of Epicurean philosophy. Your book has been out for some time now and also you have been interviewed a number of times. We can refer listeners to our earlier interview if they want to find more in depth info about your background and how you came to write the book, so this interview can jump right in to the philosophy.

List of Questions (to be updated)

1 - If you were writing the book over again today, would you change anything?

2 - Many people seem to have conflicting interpretations of what "ataraxia" or "tranquility" really mean. For some people tranquility is just a specific frame of mind, and for others it may be a specific list of actions that imply a very strict list of activities that a person will or will not do. Does pursuit of these goals mean there is a specific list of do's and don'ts that everyone must follow? If not, how is the best way to get a firm grip on what pursuit of these goals means in real life?

3 - Epicurus seems to lay great emphasis on considering the condition of normal healthy living without pain to be a state of pleasure. Do you see this observation - that the healthy activity of a living thing in a way that is natural to it is pleasure - as helpful to explaining to people why absence of pain does not imply "inaction" but indeed "healthy normal activity"?

4 - Related to that last question, can you tell us your thoughts on Torquatus' rejection of the "does your hand long for pleasure" argument from Chrysippus? Is this to be understood as making the same point made in the illustration that the host (who is not thirsty) pouring wine for his guest (who is thirsty) is in a similar state of pleasure to the guest who is drinking it? Can you explain these two illustrations? [Do these two examples illustrate that absence of pain is not a state of numbness but normal healthy pain-free action, and that the reason "absence of

pain" is the greatest pleasure" is that an experience filled with pleasures cannot by definition be "filled" any further?]

5 - Do you have thoughts on how to bridge the gap between people who like to "philosophize" and those who are more into "self-help" so as to make the discussion of Epicurus more relevant and understandable?

6 - Do you see dangers in the possible development of a "pop-culture Epicureanism" similar to the way that there seems to be a "pop Stoicism" that has abandoned the roots of what it originally meant to be a Stoic?

7 - Do you think that Epicureanism is enjoying a resurgence of interest, as a scholarly topic, especially among women - such as yourself, Catherine Wilson and Pamela Gordon? If so (in your opinion), why?

8 - Dr. Austin, I bought "The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia (Hackett Classics)" by Epicurus, Brad Inwood, Lloyd P. Gerson because you recommend it in your book. Can you say something about why you recommend this particular collection of primary sources?

9 - What other schools of philosophy are close to your heart? Which schools you find worth studying in detail?

10 - Do you have any plans for future writing on Epicurus?

Post by "Pacatus" of May 26, 2023 at 5:34 PM

Professor Austin, how did you yourself come to Epicureanism - both as a subject for your scholarship, and for your personal life?

(I know you fleshed this out a bit in the final chapter of your book.)

Post by "Pacatus" of May 26, 2023 at 5:48 PM

Do you think that Epicureanism is enjoying a resurgence of interest, as a scholarly topic, especially among women - such as yourself, Catherine Wilson and Pamela Gordon? If so (in your opinion), why?

Post by “Kalosyni” of May 27, 2023 at 3:39 PM

Possible questions for Emily:

Now that you have written the book and also been interviewed a number of times...

---Do you have thoughts on how to bridge the gap between people who like to "philosophize" and those who are more into "self-help"?

---Will Epicureanism be forever deemed as somehow "esoteric" and beyond the ability or interest of many people?

---Do you see dangers in the possible development of a "pop-culture Epicureanism"?

---Any further thoughts on the parts of Epicurean philosophy which seem to be understood with divergent interpretations...for example "ataraxia" or the meaning of "pleasure"?

Post by “Don” of May 27, 2023 at 5:04 PM

LOL 😄 I keep wanting to respond to the questions myself!

PS. Just to say explicitly: That just goes to the thoughtfulness of the questions.

Post by “Cassius” of May 27, 2023 at 7:28 PM

As Kalosyni and others have noted, we interviewed Emily Austin earlier in Podcasts 156 and 157, so we don't want a straight repeat of what we've already discussed with her before. I'm thinking that the intervening months since then have opened up lots of room for follow-up thought on interviews and responses she has received since then, so let's think about that angle as part of thinking up questions so we can make the most of our time with her.

Thread

[Episode 156 - Lucretius Today Interviews Dr. Emily Austin - Part One](#)

Welcome to episode 156, a special two-part Episode of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you too find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where...



Cassius

January 10, 2023 at 12:58 AM

Thread

[Episode 157 - Lucretius Today Interviews Dr. Emily Austin - Part Two](#)

Welcome to episode 157, part two of a special two part Episode of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you too find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at...



Cassius

January 19, 2023 at 10:13 AM

Post by "Cleveland Okie" of May 28, 2023 at 10:10 AM

Here is my first question: Dr. Austin, I bought "The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia (Hackett Classics)" by Epicurus, Brad Inwood, Lloyd P. Gerson because you recommend it in your book. Can you say something about why you recommend this particular collection of primary sources?

Post by "TauPhi" of May 31, 2023 at 9:33 AM

What other schools of philosophy are close to your heart? Which schools you find worth studying in detail?

Post by “Kalosyni” of May 31, 2023 at 1:22 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Professor Austin, how did you yourself come to Epicureanism – both as a subject for your scholarship, and for your personal life?

(I know you fleshed this out a bit in the final chapter of your book.)

Thanks Pactatus for the question...and Emily explains that in the opening of the previous podcast interview, so we may end up skipping that question and instead jumping right into the philosophy questions (or possibly having a very short two sentence summary).

Her introduction is in Episode 156 (see post 6 above for the link).