

Episode 189 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 41 - Chapter 15 - Extension, Submergence, & Revival 04

Post by "Cassius" of August 20, 2023 at 5:12 PM

Welcome to Episode 189 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 find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics. We are now in the process of a series of podcasts intended to provide a general overview of Epicurean philosophy based on the organizational structure employed by Norman DeWitt in his book "Epicurus and His Philosophy."

This week we complete our discussion of Chapter 15, entitled "Extension, Submergence, and Revival," and we reflect on the book as a whole as we close this series of episodes of the podcast.

Chapter XV - Extension, Submergence, And Revival

- The Epicurean Revival

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/56652884>

Post by "Cassius" of August 20, 2023 at 5:15 PM

Kalosyni has started a new thread to help us with ideas for the final episode of this series of the podcast, to be recorded on 8/27/23.

Post

[Let's Make a List of 1\) Major Causes of the Decline of Epicurean Philosophy after Lucretius and 2\) The Obstacles to its Revival Through Today](#)

Next week for our final episode of our podcast series on Norman DeWitt's book we want to close with a discussion on the reasons the Epicurean movement crested around the time of Lucretius and began a long decline. We also want to cover the obstacles to the resurgence of an organized Epicurean movement in the intervening years up through today.

There are probably many causes of each, and we would like to know your thoughts so we can consider including them in the final episode.



Kalosyni

August 20, 2023 at 1:02 PM

That's where we should conduct the main part of the discussion, because the topic is a great one and separate from this episode. I will have to work to keep up but I will keep a running list of items here. I will fine tune the title of that post just a little - but note that the suggestions included are potential, and for discussion only as to whether we think they were factors:

A) Major Causes of the Decline of Epicurean Philosophy "As A Movement Where People Identify Their Primary Worldview as Epicurean" after Lucretius

1. Potential loss of livelihood, reputation, or life due to ostracism by those who advocate Christianity, Islam, Judaism, or other competing worldview.
2. Closing of organized schools reduced opportunities for collaboration or education of children(?)
3. Accepting the proposition that wagering on the possibility of life after death was worth the risk of acting on faith.
4. Accepting the proposition that one's beliefs about the Christian god are in fact one of one's greatest sources of comfort and not distress (burning lights)
5. Possibility that the texts were not translated into Latin or local languages in sufficient numbers to penetrate deeply enough into common culture.
6. Loss of confidence in Epicurean doctrine (?)
7. Possibility that if the focus of Epicurean philosophy becomes "having a good time" or even "helping people" then the proponents of the school lose the intensity of Epicurus or Lucretius in wanting to live according to the "truth" - the "way things are" -- as they believed the Physics and Canonics establish to be true. When you lose the zeal to pursue this "truth" for yourself and then to communicate this "truth" to others, then it becomes very tempting to compromise and go along with the submergence of the key doctrines for the sake of "getting along" and living for the pleasure of the moment, and slighting the

mental pleasure involved in wishing to know and follow "the truth."

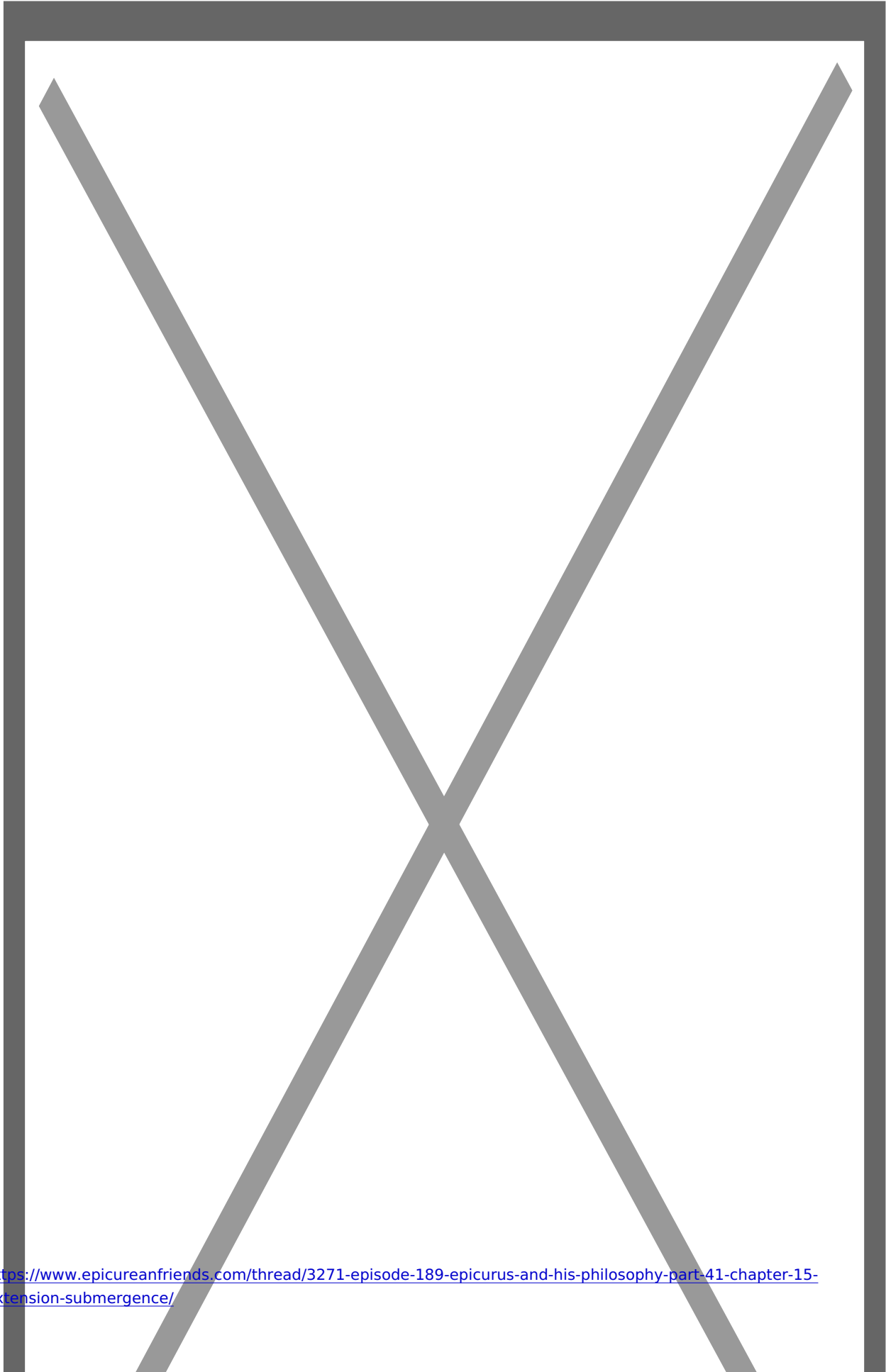
B) Major Obstacles to the Revival of Epicurean Philosophy "As A Movement Where People Identify Their Primary Worldview as Epicurean" through Today

(To the extent not included in A above)

Post by "Joshua" of August 27, 2023 at 11:41 AM

Farinata degli Uberti

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3271-episode-189-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-41-chapter-15-extension-submergence/>

[Farinata degli Uberti - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

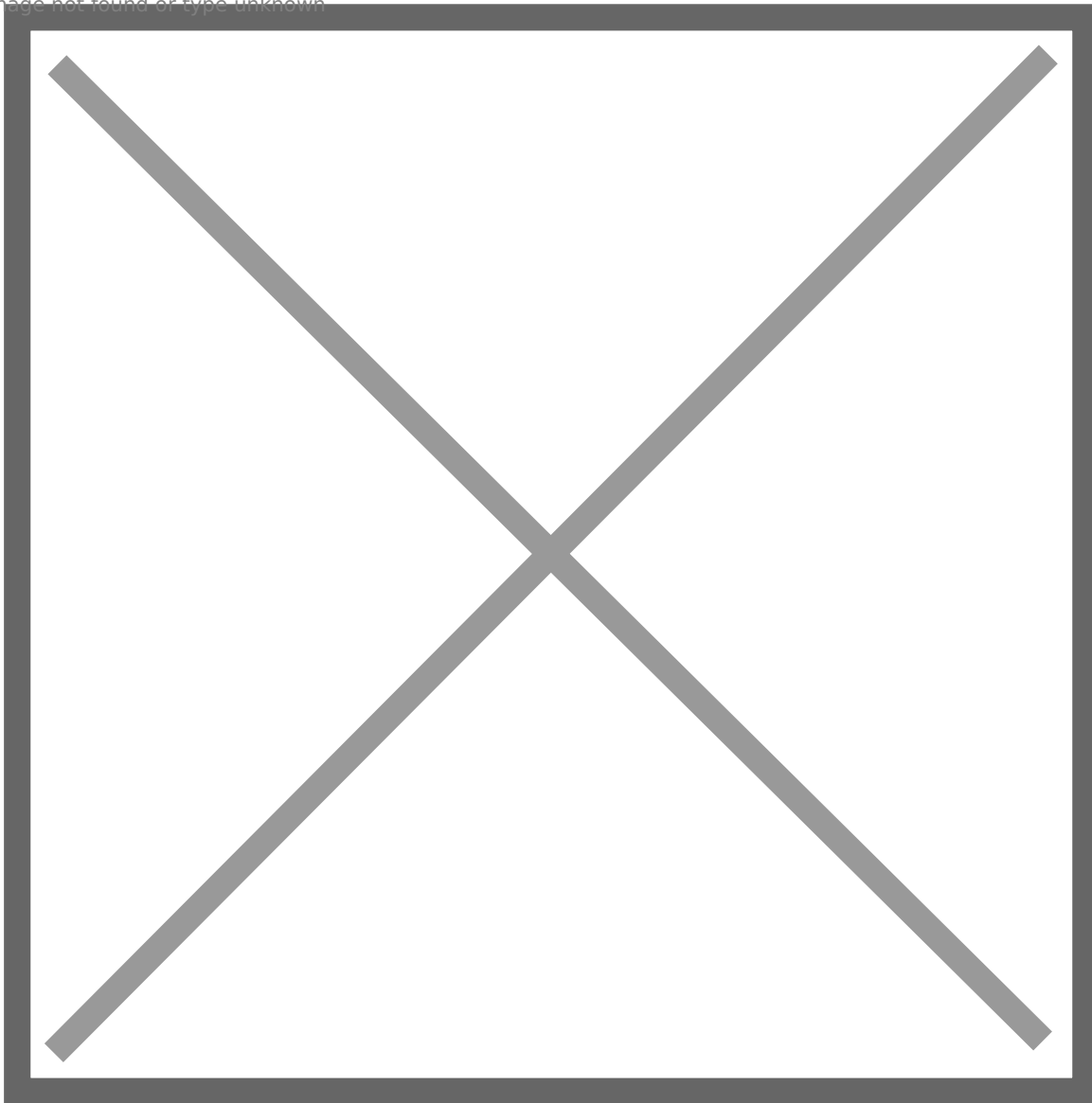
Quote from Boccaccio

He was of the opinion of Epicurus, that the soul dies with the body, and maintained that human happiness consisted in temporal pleasures; but he did not follow these in the way that Epicurus did, that is by making long fasts to have afterwards pleasure in eating dry bread; but was fond of good and delicate viands, and ate them without waiting to be hungry; and for this sin he is damned as a Heretic in this place.

Cosma Raimondi, Letter

[Cosma Raimondi - NewEpicurean](#)

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[Cosma Raimondi \(Chapter 22\) - Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts](#)

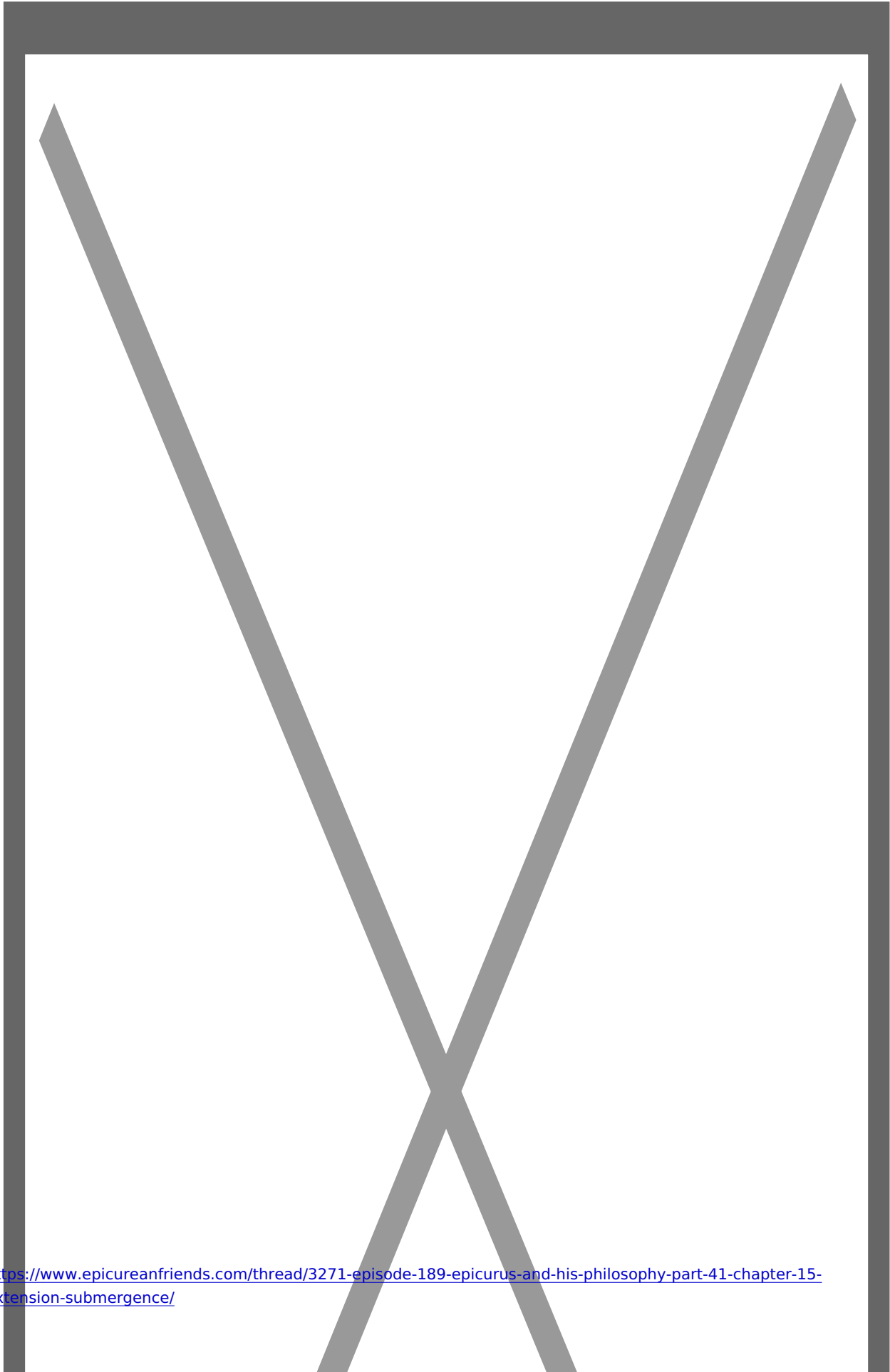
Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts - August 1997

www.cambridge.org

Lorenzo Valla

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3271-episode-189-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-41-chapter-15-extension-submergence/>

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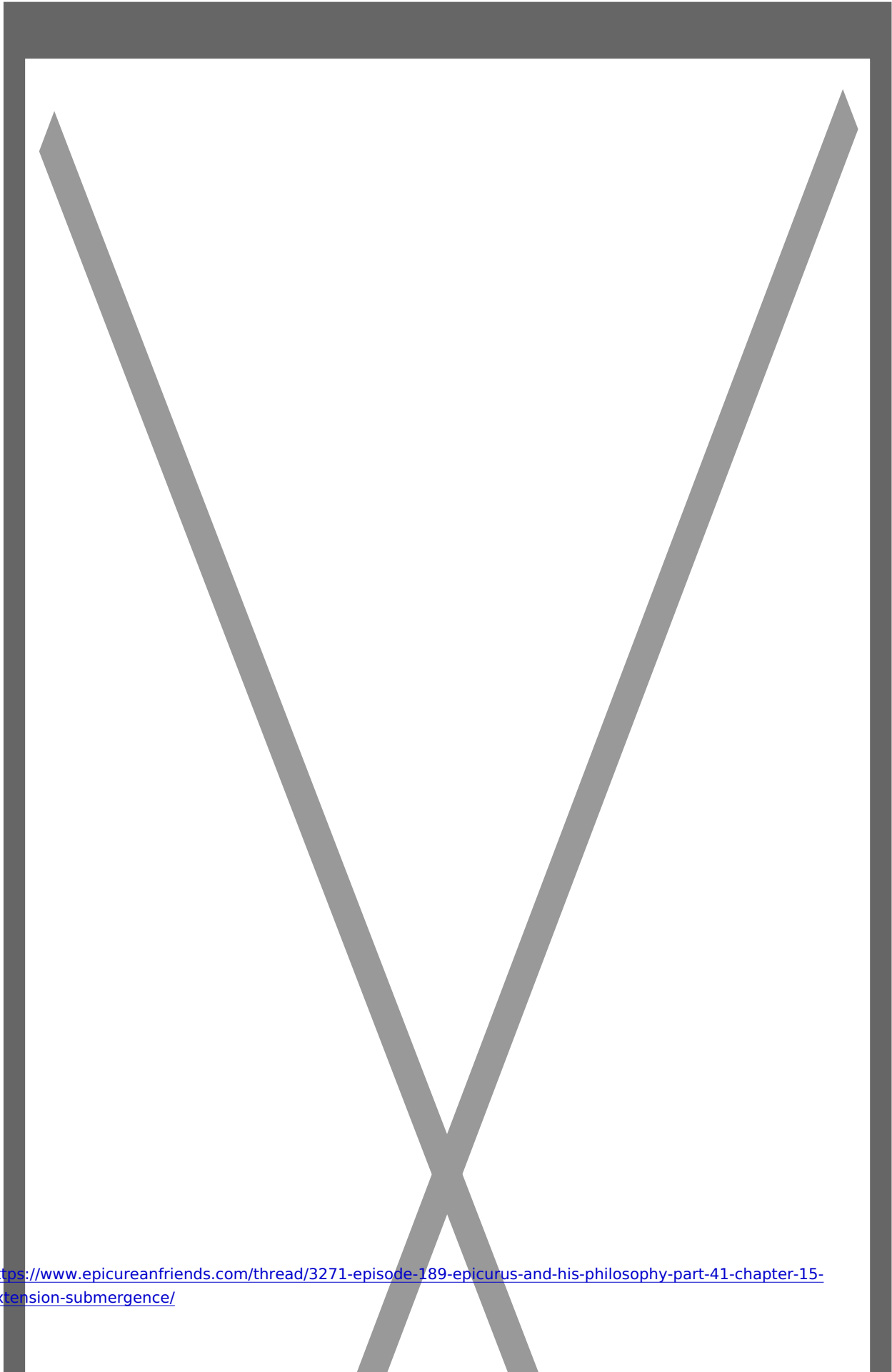
<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3271-episode-189-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-41-chapter-15-extension-submergence/>

[Lorenzo Valla - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

Michael Marullus

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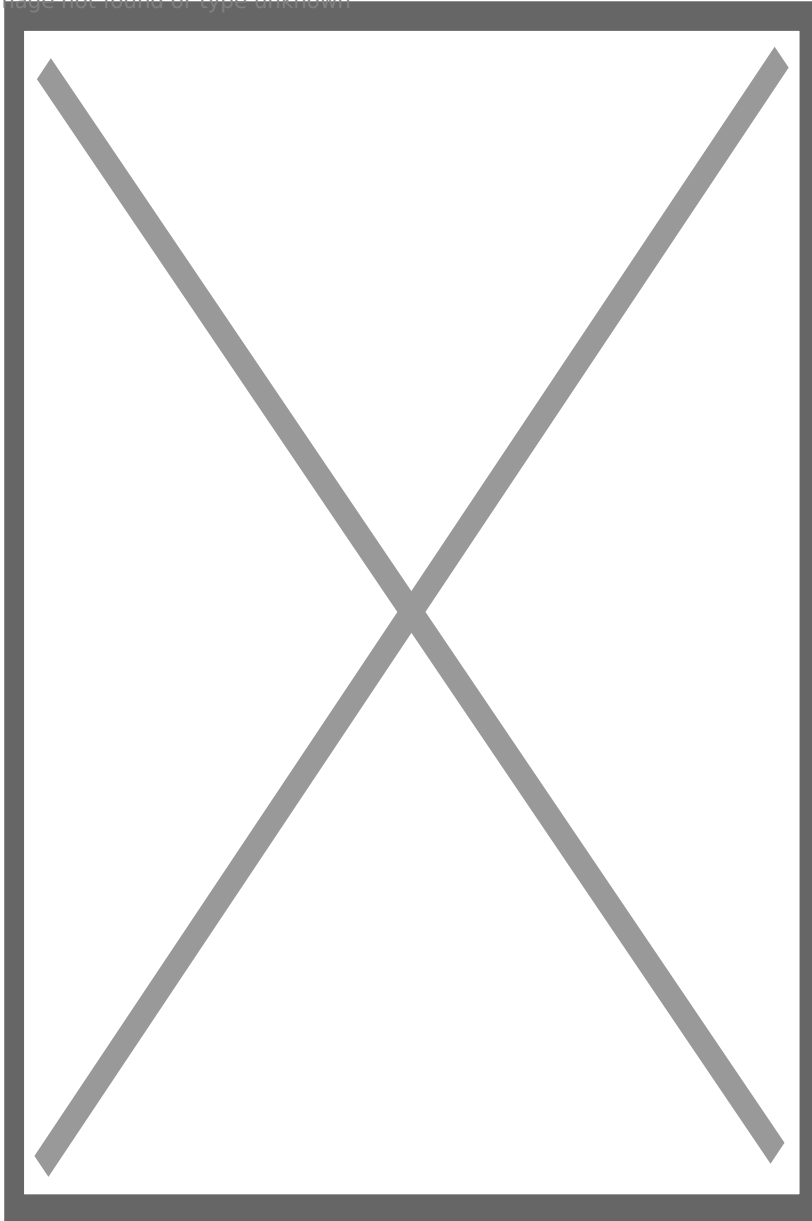
<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3271-episode-189-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-41-chapter-15-extension-submergence/>

[Michael Tarchaniota Marullus - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

Printer and Bookmaker Aldus Manutius

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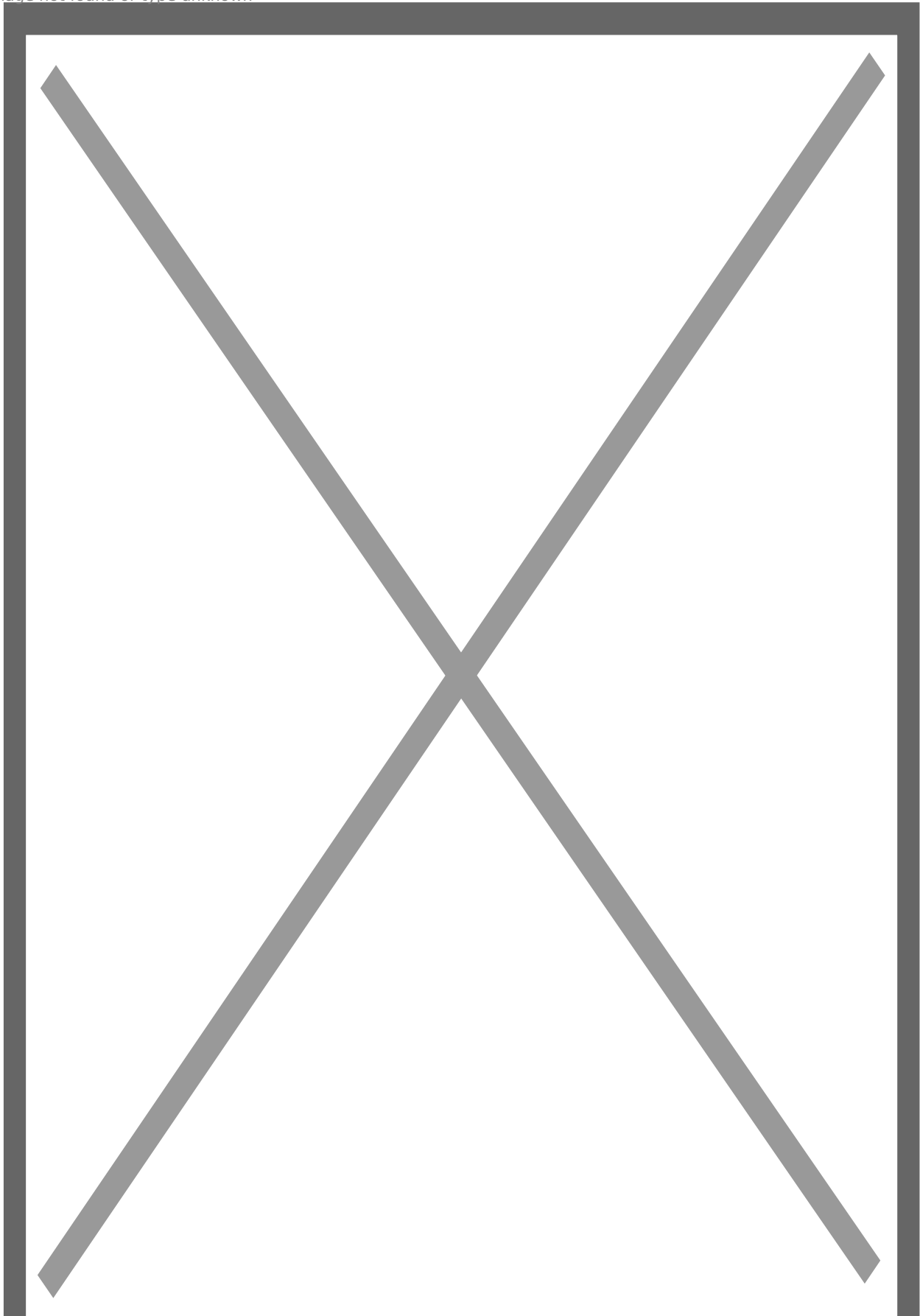


[Aldus Manutius - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

John Evelyn

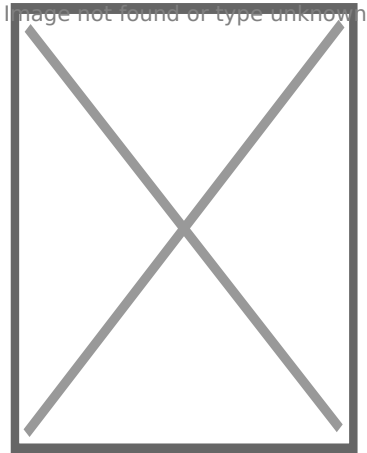
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[John Evelyn - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

Don's *Letter to Menoikeus*



[Letter To Menoikeus: A New Translation With Commentary : Don Boozar : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

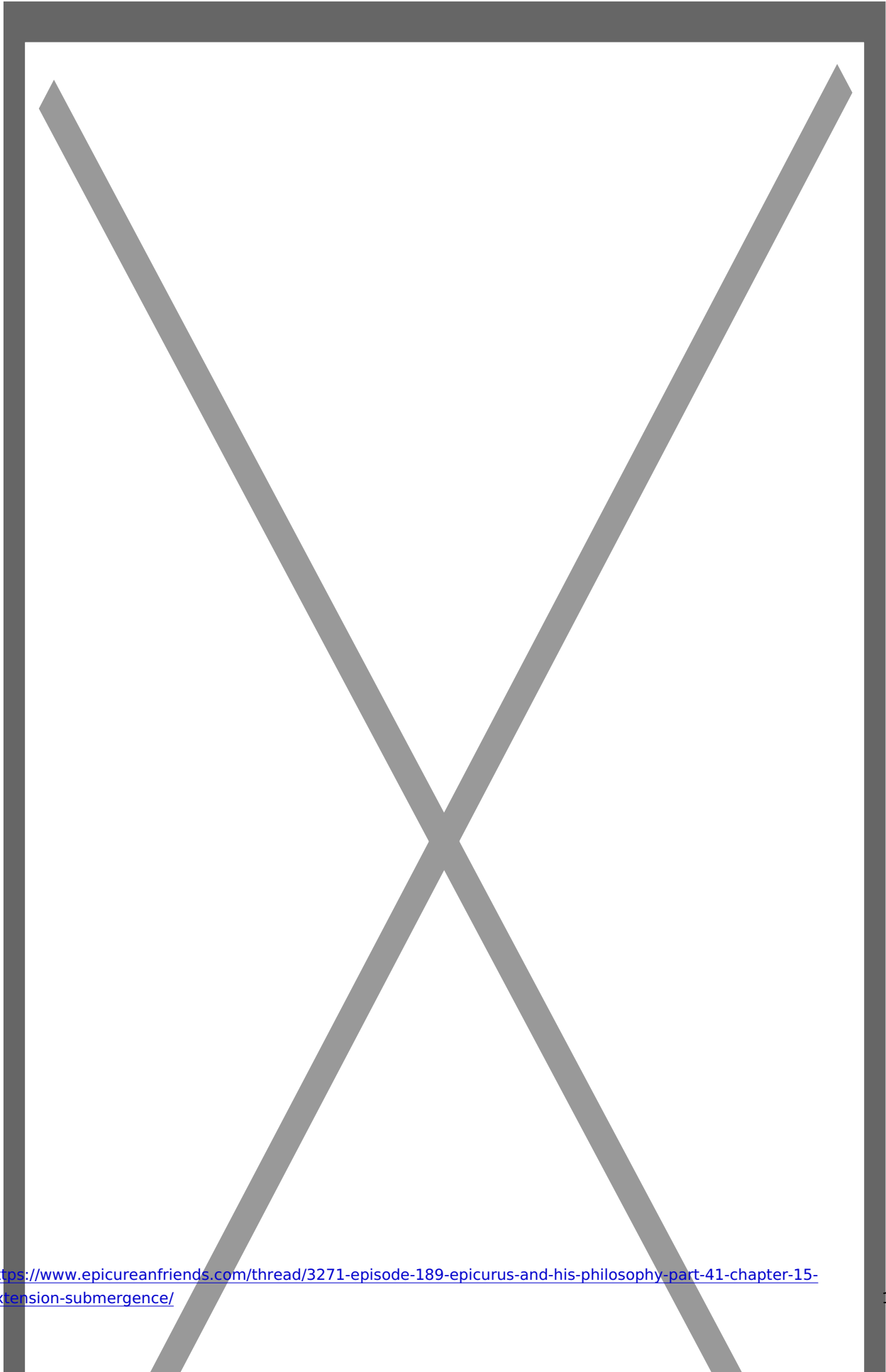
A new translation of the Letter to Menoikeus (Menoecus) by Epicurus with commentary.
archive.org

Lucy Hutchinson, *Letter to the Earl of Anglesey*

[Full text | Lucy Hutchinson's letter to Lord Anglesey \(1675\)](#)

Giordano Bruno

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3271-episode-189-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-41-chapter-15-extension-submergence/>

Post by “Joshua” of August 27, 2023 at 11:48 AM

We didn't discuss this, but 8th and 9th century Benedictine Abbot [Rabanus Maurus](#) wrote an encyclopedic treatise titled *De Rerum Naturas*, "On the Natures of Things", at the monastery of Fulda where it is believed that Lucretius' poem was rediscovered in 1417 by Poggio Bracciolini.

Post by “Cassius” of August 27, 2023 at 12:55 PM

Thanks for these updates Joshua! Some of these, especially Valla and Raimondi, we need to find the texts and post them in our Texts section. Will work on that.

Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2023 at 7:47 PM

As Joshua cited above, one person we need to really turn a spotlight on is COSMA RAIMONDI. See the link below for more on his letter. It may well be that Raimondi is both the first and oldest firm exponent of Epicurus that we have in our records emerging out of the dark ages. As such it would be very very interesting to learn more about him, as he seems to have been active, and discussing Epicurus with others, right around the same time, or possibly even before, the "rediscovery" of Lucretius' poem. I have not been able to find out anything more about him, but his name probably deserves to be right up there on the list of people who most faithfully argued for Epicurus during the extremely long dark spell when he had so few defenders. At present Cosma Raimondi does not even have a Wikipedia entry for his name -- that needs to change! 😊

Thread

[**Cosma Raimondi's Letter to Ambrogio Tignosi**](#)

A Letter to Ambrogio Tignosi in Defence of Epicurus against the Stoics, Academics and Peripatetics

[translated by Martin Davies \(from Google Books\)](#)

epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/4084/

I have very little leisure at the moment to argue my views on the subject which your letters raise, being taken up with more weighty and much more difficult matters. I do not mind saying that I am very much occupied with my studies in astronomy. But since I have always followed and wholly approved the...



Cassius

August 29, 2023 at 7:42 PM

Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2023 at 9:10 PM

I have set up a sub forum on Gassendi and included a partial transcription of the English edition of his main work on Epicurus:

Thread

[**Gassendi's English Version of Life of Epicurus - Thomas Stanley Edition**](#)

Here is a link to Gassendi's work as posted at NewEpicurean.com:

<https://newepicurean.com/epicurus/gassendis-epicurus/>

Direct link to the PDF at Archive.org:

<https://archive.org/details/Stanle...curusByGassendi>

Link to a transcription of this edition here at Epicureanfriends:

[**Gassendi's Life of Epicurus \(Thomas Stanley\) - Partial Transcription**](#)



<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3271-episode-189-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-41-chapter-15-extension-submergence/>

Cassius

August 29, 2023 at 9:03 PM

Post by “Cassius” of August 31, 2023 at 7:19 AM

Joshua you mention in this episode something I do not recall your mentioning before about Bruno.

You said that in particular he was fascinated by the "many worlds" position (presumably referring to Epicurus?).

If you have something specific on that I would appreciate your posting on it as that is a subject that fascinates me and I don't think we give it nearly enough attention.

Perhaps here unless there is a better place:

[The Universe As Eternal In Time: Nothing From Nothing / Nothing To Nothing / Eternality of the Universe](#)

Post by “Joshua” of August 31, 2023 at 8:15 AM

Yes, he wrote a text entitled *De l'Infinito Universo et Mondi, On the Infinity of the Universe and Worlds*, which I have not read, and also touches upon the subject in other writings. I'll have more time for this later though!

Post by “Cassius” of August 31, 2023 at 3:19 PM

This episode should be out soon, and in reviewing it I want to thank Joshua for bringing up one final time Thomas More's "Utopia."

In the future I think we really need to single that out for examination and reflection, because as Joshua points out, More seems to want to accept many of the "life for happiness and pleasure" aspects of Epicurus, but he wants to condemn and banish as totally unacceptable the core

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3271-episode-189-epicurus-and-his-philosophy-part-41-chapter-15-extension-submergence/>

viewpoints of an absence of providential god and reward and punishment after death.

I have not read this material recently enough to pass judgment on the extent to which More really believed this, or was just hedging his bets or protecting himself from the church, but the way Joshua describes his enthusiasm in the position, it sounds to me like More may serve as a classic example of the type of person who wants to pick and choose what they regard as beneficial ethics without taking the full medicine of a proper understanding of the universe.

Joshua indicates that More would expel true Epicureans from his otherwise "Epicurean-lite" society, and so it sounds to me like "Utopia" might serve as an ultimate example of the problems with an "eclectic" or "syncretic" approach to Epicurus that fails to appreciate the full philosophy.

I set up this thread for future discussion:

Thread

[Thomas More and his "Utopia"](#)

As Joshua points out in several of our podcasts, More seems to want to accept many of the "life for happiness and pleasure" aspects of Epicurus, but he wants to condemn and banish as totally unacceptable the core viewpoints of an absence of providential god and reward and punishment after death.

I have not read this material recently enough to pass judgment on the extent to which More really believed this, or was just hedging his bets or protecting himself from the church, but the way Joshua...



Cassius

August 31, 2023 at 3:19 PM

I know we have discussed Utopia before but I think always in some other context. If we need to set up a sub-forum for this to handle multiple posts we can do that as well.

Post by "Cassius" of August 31, 2023 at 4:19 PM

The final 15 minutes of this episode are creating some difficult editing decisions so I want to emphasize several things in case the editing doesn't reflect their significance.

1 - Joshua's statement about the problems caused when people try to advocate Epicurean positions without including (a) the mortality of the soul and (b) denial of supernatural providence. That's what the conversation about More's Utopia is all about, and it's very difficult to overstate the significance of this. I was very tempted to end the episode with Joshua's observation on this, but we also needed to include:

2 - Kalosyni's question about what cautions to give for people new to reading DeWitt or other introductory books, which produced some important observations, and

3 - Martin's cite to the final sentence of DeWitt's "Bibliography" section, about the need to focus on the texts of Epicurus in unemended form rather than the secondary literature (ancient or modern), which would have made a better closing sentence to the book than the sentence DeWitt actually used.

I want to again thank the podcasters for their work in producing forty-one episodes for this series of the podcast.

I also want to include Don in that thank you, and as you will hear when this episode is released we did not forget his contributions to many episodes of this series.

Post by “Cassius” of August 31, 2023 at 5:12 PM

Episode 189 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available!

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/56652884>

Post by “Cassius” of August 31, 2023 at 6:45 PM

If you don't listen to any other part of this episode, listen to what Joshua has to say at 46:10 to 50:12.

Unfortunately I didn't follow up on it til later in the episode, but I think Joshua's analysis there is probably the best summary of the main issue that confronts those who support Epicurus and want to talk to others about the philosophy.