

What Epicurus Offers To The Modern World As Of April, 2024?

Post by “Cassius” of April 24, 2024 at 1:29 PM

Earlier today I was asked a couple of questions that would be good to toss around, since it's a common question:

What does Epicurus offer to the world (common people) today?

1. Don't you have to be rich to be an Epicurean?
2. Epicureanism doesn't offer anything "positive" like Stoicism or Buddhism offers. What do you offer to compete with those?
3. What if your life isn't "together" and you don't have time to read philosophy? Why would someone like that spending any time discussing Epicurus?
4. Why don't you ever discuss "meaningfulness" because I've been convinced that's what I should want out of life?
5. How do you expect me to understand Epicurus when he approaches so many things so differently than what I am familiar with at church or in the workplaces?

Those are just samples but we've heard similar questions many times before.

If we are really profiting from studying Epicurus, we ought to be able to answer such questions confidently and concisely.

I will give my own thoughts but let's throw this out for discussion.

Post by “Joshua” of April 24, 2024 at 2:48 PM

Quote

Why don't you ever discuss "meaningfulness" because I've been convinced that's what I should want out of life?

The phrase "meaning of life" first appears in the record of the English language in 1834. 18 years after the invention of the heliotype, 3 years earlier than the invention of the telegraph.

Quote

"Temptations in the Wilderness!" exclaims Teufelsdröckh, "Have we not all to be tried with such? Not so easily can the old Adam, lodged in us by birth, be dispossessed. Our Life is compassed round with Necessity; yet is the meaning of Life itself no other than Freedom, than Voluntary Force: thus have we a warfare; in the beginning, especially, a hard-fought battle. For the God-given mandate, Work thou in Well-doing, lies mysteriously written, in Promethean Prophetic Characters, in our hearts; and leaves us no rest, night or day, till it be deciphered and obeyed; till it burn forth, in our conduct, a visible, acted Gospel of Freedom. And as the clay-given mandate, Eat thou and be filled, at the same time persuasively proclaims itself through every nerve,—must not there be a confusion, a contest, before the better Influence can become the upper?"

"To me nothing seems more natural than that the Son of Man, when such God-given mandate first prophetically stirs within him, and the Clay must now be vanquished or vanquish,—should be carried of the spirit into grim Solitudes, and there fronting the Tempter do grimmest battle with him; defiantly setting him at naught till he yield and fly. Name it as we choose: with or without visible Devil, whether in the natural Desert of rocks and sands, or in the populous moral Desert of selfishness and baseness,—to such Temptation are we all called. Unhappy if we are not! Unhappy if we are but Half-men, in whom that divine handwriting has never blazed forth, all-subduing, in true sun-splendor; but quivers dubiously amid meaner lights: or smoulders, in dull pain, in darkness, under earthly vapors!—Our Wilderness is the wide World in an Atheistic Century; our Forty Days are long years of suffering and fasting: nevertheless, to these also comes an end. Yes, to me also was given, if not Victory, yet the consciousness of Battle, and the resolve to persevere therein while life or faculty is left. To me also, entangled in the enchanted forests, demon-peopled, doleful of sight and of sound, it was given, after weariest wanderings, to work out my way into the higher sunlit slopes—of that Mountain which has no summit, or whose summit is in Heaven only!"

Quote

there is in man a HIGHER than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness! Was it not to preach forth this same HIGHER that sages and martyrs, the Poet and the Priest, in all times, have spoken and suffered; bearing testimony, through life and through death, of the Godlike that is in Man, and how in the Godlike only has he Strength and Freedom? Which God-inspired Doctrine art thou also honored to be taught; O Heavens! and broken with manifold merciful Afflictions, even till thou become contrite and learn it! Oh, thank thy Destiny for these; thankfully bear what yet remain: thou hadst need of them; the Self in thee needed to be annihilated. By benignant fever-paroxysms is Life rooting out the deep-seated chronic Disease, and triumphs over Death. On the roaring billows of Time, thou art not

engulfed, but borne aloft into the azure of Eternity. Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the EVERLASTING YEA, wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him."

--Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*

The meaning of this 'meaning of life' is as elusive as the claims of the snake-oil salesman, because that's exactly what it is; an imaginary cure to what is not, in fact, a disease. The 'disease' is explicitly atheism and hedonism, and to sell the cure one must first sell the idea that the disease is real and shameful. When they tell you that your life without gods is without meaning, they are you telling you to feel ashamed.

Don't.

Post by "Pacatus" of April 24, 2024 at 2:59 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

What if your life isn't "together" and you don't have time to read philosophy? Why would someone like that spending any time discussing Epicurus?

Even a simple, bite-by-bite imbibing of Epicurean principles can (in my opinion) be helpful in getting one's life together (just as in many therapies). A deep, time-consuming dive into scholarship or even popular sources (such as Emily Austin) is not necessary - and for many people may not be possible. This site is a very good resource for those people, who can tap in as they need and wish. It has been for me.

[This question could merit a whole thread of its own - as could some of the others no doubt.]

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VS 27 (Bailey version): "In all other occupations the fruit comes painfully after completion, but, in philosophy, pleasure goes hand in hand with knowledge; for enjoyment does not follow comprehension, but comprehension and enjoyment are simultaneous." Effective therapy (in my experience) does the same: once, when I was going through a really rough time, I went into my first meeting with a therapist (who later became a friend) scared, anxious and depressed - I left laughing. Was that the end of it? No. But that was the process that kept me coming back for some time.

Same for here.

Post by “Pacatus” of April 24, 2024 at 3:09 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

The meaning of this 'meaning of life' is as elusive as the claims of the snake-oil salesman, because that's exactly what it is; an imaginary cure to what is not, in fact, a disease. The 'disease' is explicitly atheism and hedonism, and to sell the cure one must first sell the idea that the disease is real and shameful. When they tell you that your life without gods is without meaning, they are you telling you to feel ashamed.

Don't.

Boom! 👍👍👍

Post by “Godfrey” of April 24, 2024 at 5:52 PM

To this question of "meaning" I would add:

The search for "the greatest good" in ancient times is also a question of meaning.

That "the greatest good" is pleasure leads to the question of what pleasure is, which leads to the understanding that it is an organic faculty, that humans are animals, that the mind cannot be separated from the body.

This, along with the understanding that the universe is material, leads to the understanding that th search for meaning is individual, as is the responsibility of achieving our most pleasant life.

Post by “Eikadistes” of April 24, 2024 at 6:11 PM

- *Don't you have to be rich to be an Epicurean?*

Not at all. The Notorious B.I.G. said, *Mo Money, Mo Problems*, and Epicurus would have agreed. As Lennon-McCartney wrote, "I don't care too much for money, 'cause money can't buy me love." And as Epicurus, himself wrote, "Poverty, when measured by the natural purpose of life, is great wealth, but unlimited wealth is great poverty" (VS 25).

- *Epicureanism doesn't offer anything "positive" like Stoicism or Buddhism offers. What do you offer to compete with those?*

Epicurean Philosophy offers freedom. It champions choice and rejects fate. It liberates us from turmoil by rejecting superstition. It offers a worldview that recognizes friendship as the greatest pleasure in life, and also, our surest source of security.

- *What if your life isn't "together" and you don't have time to read philosophy? Why would someone like that spending any time discussing Epicurus?*

There is no better time than now to prioritize the pursuit of happiness, "for no man can ever find the time unsuitable or too late to study the health of his soul." (Ep. Men. 122).

Life can be excruciating sometimes, but to enjoy true happiness, "We must laugh and philosophize at the same time, and do our household duties, and employ our other faculties, and never cease proclaiming the sayings of the true philosophy." (VS 41).

- *Why don't you ever discuss "meaningfulness" because I've been convinced that's what I should want out of life?*

The "purpose" or "goal" of life was of prime importance to Epicurus. As Lucretius recognized, "Mankind therefore ever toils vainly and to no purpose and wastes life in groundless cares because sure enough they have not learnt what is the true end of getting and up to what point genuine pleasure goes on increasing" (DRN V:1430).

Your purpose is to live your best life (through the pursuit of pleasure).

- *How do you expect me to understand Epicurus when he approaches so many things so differently than what I am familiar with at church or in the workplaces?*

You already understand Epicurus.

When you wonder if it will rain, do you ask a *Priest*? Or a *meteorologist*?

You already understand Epicurus.

You believe in extra-terrestrial life?

You *definitely* understand Epicurus.

Do you like Science Fiction?

It came from an Epicurean.

You were required by society to embrace at least twelve years of a scientific education. If you remember any of Newton's Laws of Thermodynamics or Einstein's Theory of Relativity, there's a good chance your outlook is fundamentally Epicurean.

If you believe in the pursuit of happiness and the importance of friendship, you already appreciate Epicurean Ethics. If you acknowledge that Swiss scientists are smashing atoms together, and that nuclear weapons exist, you already accept Epicurean Physics. If you listen to your belly when you're hungry, grab a blanket when you're cold, and take a nap when you're tired, you already practice Epicurean Epistemology.

Post by “Don” of April 24, 2024 at 11:20 PM

There have been some great responses to your original list of questions, [Cassius](#) . Here's my take fwiw:

Don't you have to be rich to be an Epicurean?

No, but... It seems to me you have to have your basic needs met. You don't need to be "rich" (however one defines that), but you can't be starving, homeless, in fear for your life or for when your next meal might be to be living with eudaimonia. If we look at [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) or [the revision of Maslow by Diener and Tay](#), we find there are some basic needs that need to be met, but (as Diener and Tay show in their research) you can also be working on fulfilling different needs at the same time and still experience well-being (or subjective well-being - SWB - as they term it).

I have to ask here, too: **What does it mean "to be an Epicurean"?** Do you have to "proclaim your faith" so to speak... or can the conduct of one's life and approach to living be "Epicurean"

without "being an Epicurean"? There are several people on this forum who have expressed that they were living an "Epicurean" life before they knew about Epicurus. Epicurus posited that an "Epicurean" life was a natural life, informed by one's natural state of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. There are details and more, of course and no doubt, that constitute an Epicurean life (e.g., material universe, indifferent gods (if one wants to say they exist physically), no afterlife, etc.) but you can be living "like an Epicurean" without maybe even realizing it.

Epicureanism doesn't offer anything "positive" like Stoicism or Buddhism offers. What do you offer to compete with those?

I think [Eikadistes](#) said it well: "Epicurean Philosophy offers freedom. It champions choice and rejects fate. It liberates us from turmoil by rejecting superstition. It offers a worldview that recognizes friendship as the greatest pleasure in life, and also, our surest source of security." That all sounds pretty positive to me!

What if your life isn't "together" and you don't have time to read philosophy? Why would someone like that spending any time discussing Epicurus?

Again, I would stress that Epicurus calls one to a "natural life." You don't need to immerse yourself in the philosophy to understand the basics and to reap benefits. It is natural to seek pleasure and avoid pain. It is natural to want an untroubled mind in a healthy body. Question your choices: Will what I'm doing lead to more pain or more pleasure? Realize that you have control over your life, you are responsible for your life. You are the captain of your own little boat... and seek out friends who can help, assist, support, and guide you.

That said, if you're life isn't "together" to the extent that you need professional counseling or medical assistance, seek out the counseling or medical attention!

Epicurus's advice to Menoikeus says it well: One is never too young or too old to love and practice wisdom. It is never out of season or untimely to seek well-being. The time for you to seek happiness is now, here.

Why don't you ever discuss "meaningfulness" because I've been convinced that's what I should want out of life?

What convinced you of that, and what do you mean by "meaningfulness" or "purpose". There is no meaning to life other than to pursue pleasure in all its multiplicity. [Monty Python](#) said the "meaning of life" was "try and be nice to people, avoid eating fat, read a good book every now and then, get some walking in, and try and live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations." Not bad, as far as it goes for a comedic film. The Universe does NOT provide a "meaning" for each individual life or for itself. There is no Great Meaning behind it all. To me, that is freeing! We make our own "meaning" when we decide what impact we will have, what we will focus on, how we treat others and in turn how we want others to treat us, and so on. Pursuing well-being by pursuing pleasure and avoiding unnecessary pain is a purpose.

How do you expect me to understand Epicurus when he approaches so many things so differently than what I am familiar with at church or in the workplaces?

Maybe a fresh perspective is necessary. What do you believe you get of value from the approaches at church or the workplace? It sounds like you may be finding those things unsatisfactory if you're still seeking answers. The Christian church is built on a foundation of Greek philosophy anyway - mostly Stoic and Platonic principles. It pays lip service to Jesus's apocalyptic message, but the ancient Greek influence is strong. So, you're already following a philosophy if you're taking your cues from church.

I would again point to [Eikadistes](#) 's list of things you already understand from an Epicurean perspective. By and large, we live in an Epicurean world now. Epicurus was a prelude and precursor to science, an acceptance of a material world, a curiosity about extraterrestrial life, and more.

Epicurus also taught the importance - the vital importance - of friendship. Friendship is like dancing in a chorus, clasped hands, twirling round and round. Each dancer supports the other. Epicureanism is a philosophy of friendship linked with personal responsibility for one's life, a life lived in a material world free from the fear of gods and free from anxiety about death. That sounds like a pretty good alternative to the "common knowledge" found in church and in the workplace.

Post by “Pacatus” of April 25, 2024 at 1:52 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I have to ask here, too: What does it mean "to be an Epicurean"? Do you have to "proclaim your faith" so to speak... or can the conduct of one's life and approach to living be "Epicurean" without "being an Epicurean"?

Or who gets to declare if the proper and necessary criteria are met to be **an** Epicurean – and what those criteria are for anyone/everyone? It's for questions like these that I am loath to call myself **an** Epicurean (or **a/an** anything along those lines). I prefer just “*Epicurean*” – as an adjective, and even that with some reservation.

In the end, I try to *fit* the philosophy to my life, so far as it seems reasonable, true and helpful (Epicurean philosophy just seems to provide that, generally, better than others). I do not try to *bind* my life (thoughts and behavior) to the demands or protocols of a philosophy in order to call myself **a** [...]. {Procrustes' bed comes to mind. 😬😬}

In the end, I may not be **an** Epicurean – let alone a “good Epicurean”. And that's okay. 😊

Post by “Don” of April 25, 2024 at 10:31 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I have to ask here, too: What does it mean "to be an Epicurean"? Do you have to "proclaim your faith" so to speak... or can the conduct of one's life and approach to living be "Epicurean" without "being an Epicurean"? There are several people on this forum who have expressed that they were living an "Epicurean" life before they knew about Epicurus.

The more I think about this, I think it could be possible to be an "accidental Epicurean." There are so many "common sense" beliefs today with science and all that one could maybe carry on a substantially Epicurean lifestyle and outlook without thinking of oneself as "being Epicurean."

That said, I think it highly unlikely that one could be an accidental Christian or accidental Jew or accidental Muslim. Maybe an accidental Buddhist - at least secular Buddhist maybe?

Or not? Thoughts?

Post by “Eikadistes” of April 25, 2024 at 10:56 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

[Quote from Don](#)

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Or who gets to declare if the proper and necessary criteria are met to be **an** Epicurean - and what those criteria are for anyone/everyone?

In a fragment, Philodemus writes, "**...we shall admonish others with great confidence, both now and when those {of us} who have become offshoots of our teachers have become eminent. And the encompassing and most important thing is, we shall obey Epicurus, according to whom we have chosen to live...**" (On Frank Criticism, 45; translated by Konstan, Clay, Glad, Thom, and Ware).

SIC FAC OMNIA TAMQVAM

SPECTET EPICVRVS



There seem to have been at least a few criteria of formal membership to the Epicurean school:

1. As [Don](#) mentioned, a voluntary Declaration of Faith, similar to the Christian sacrament of confirmation, or the *Shahada* in Islam (one of its Five Pillars), which reads "*I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God*".
2. A commitment to study the teachings of Epikouros of Samos in his own words, similar to Jewish children studying Hebrew, *prior to, during, and after* their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. This also corresponds with the Islamic recommendation to study the Qur'an in its original Arabic.
3. A promise to honor Epicurus by remaining loyal to his school, neither becoming a "dissident" nor being lost to the general confusion of the masses. So, too, to various degrees, do we see this with "heretics" in Christianity, "infidels" in Islam, and the "nāstika" of Dharmic traditions.
4. A pledge to learn about Epicurean Philosophy and share that education with other students. There is an analogue in the shared intentions of the "sangha" or "monastic community" in Buddhism (one of its Three Jewels) and various Monasteries in Christianity.

5. A guarantee to reject beliefs that contradict the teachings of Epicurus; thus, one would criticize those who misrepresent Epicurus (for example, believing him to have been a shameless glutton) or misinterpret the principles of Epicurean Philosophy.

That is not to say that that there cannot be epicurean spirits who sympathize with the Epicurean school, while simultaneously denying their identities as students, but there is a significance to one's formal recognition, like "*how many years have you been sober ... from addiction to metaphysics?*" or "*how old were you when you 'came out' to your parents ... that you reject their traditional religion?*" As I often reinforce, the modern world, *itself*, is generally epicurean in outlook, since it makes assumptions and takes for granted beliefs that are evident of the Epicurean school.

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

In the end, I may not be **an** Epicurean – let alone a “good Epicurean”. And that’s okay.



In the end, none of us are 😄 (i.e. none of us will exist).

Post by “Don” of April 25, 2024 at 11:45 PM

Thanks, [Eikadistes](#) !

It makes sense that there was a demarcation point in ancient Greece and Rome when someone declared themselves a member of the Garden and declared themselves an Epicurean and follower of Epicurus's philosophical School. There are numerous examples in the texts - Cicero and elsewhere - of people deciding to join or leave the Epicurean School. So, there had to be something "official" to mark the point in time when one joined the school, "forsaking all others" as the traditional marriage vows say.

It also strikes me that, since the Garden was open to all to attend lectures, there could have been any number of casual Epicurean-adjacent folks.

The schools did function as membership organizations and schools vied against each other for "converts" so to speak.

That said, we don't have any authorities or hierarchies or apostolic succession now. It seems to me that one could make a personal commitment to "obey Epicurus, according to whom we/I have chosen to live..." And the Philodemus does use *πειθαρχέω* "obey one in authority." This doesn't mean "blind faith" to me. It seems to me that that gets at the ideas that "I believe

Epicurus knew what he was talking about." As modern Epicureans would not accept without testing against reality, the best findings of science, but to also withhold judgement if multiple explanations were available... Like how the universe came into existence or if it's eternal or eternally cyclical or... And so on.

I realize I've strayed is far from the main topic! Feel free to branch this discussion off to another thread. But I find this thread very interesting.

Post by “TauPhi” of April 26, 2024 at 7:08 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

It seems to me that one could make a personal commitment to "obey Epicurus, according to whom we/I have chosen to live..." And the Philodemus does use *πειθαρχέω* "obey one in authority." This doesn't mean "blind faith" to me. It seems to me that that gets at the ideas that "I believe Epicurus knew what he was talking about."

I'm thinking about this sentence for few minutes now and I can't see how obeying someone in authority is not 'blind faith'. To me, that's exactly it. If I give someone authority over my own life and obey them, that means I acknowledge someone else is better at living my life. And I hit yet another religion head-on at 100 miles an hour. The whole Philodemus' quote has a striking resemblance to: 'My god is better than your god'.

"I believe Epicurus knew what he was talking about." seems to me something entirely different. It means to me: 'Hey, this dude came up with something interesting that has potential to be beneficial in my life. Let's test it out and see if that's the case'.

Another thought came to my mind while typing all this. Maybe I am completely wrong about ancient Epicureanism. During my study of it all this piousness seems to be coming back notoriously and sticking like a chewing gum to a shoe. Maybe Epicureanism was not intended as a guide for people trying to come up with their own recipes for their lives. Maybe Epicureanism was designed as yet another concealed ideology for people who are perfectly fine with buying a cookbook and never stray from its content.

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 26, 2024 at 8:08 AM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

I'm thinking about this sentence for few minutes now and I can't see how obeying someone in authority is not 'blind faith'.

Now if you think about it, the original authority was "God". In current modern times many people do not believe in God, or perhaps they believe in a God which is only remotely involved with humans (more like "new-age" spirituality). So there will be many who feel taken-aback by the idea of "obeying". We live in a very independent-minded society also.

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 26, 2024 at 8:19 AM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

During my study of it all this piousness seems to be coming back notoriously and sticking like a chewing gum to a shoe. Maybe Epicureanism was not intended as a guide for people trying to come up with their own recipes for their lives. Maybe Epicureanism was designed as yet another concealed ideology for people who are perfectly fine with buying a cookbook and never stray from its content.

I think that the main problem for us now is that half of the pages of the "cookbook" are missing.

We can see that people turned to Epicurus for answers about living a happy and good life. It seems unlikely that the "Epicureanism" during the life of Philodemus was exactly the same as the "Epicureanism" during the life of Epicurus. A whole group of people said: "yes "x,y, z" works but then it evolved and changed over time.

Post by “Don” of April 26, 2024 at 8:26 AM

The word specifically used by Philodemus is *πειθαρχησομεν* and translator of "On Frank Criticism" translates it as "obey (one in authority)" which is in line with the LSJ definition. However, the word is related directly to:

πείθω

to convince, persuade

to succeed through entreaty

(mediopassive, πείθομαι, and Epic future, πείθω, with dative)

to obey, yield

to believe, trust

(second perfect active, πέποιθα, with passive sense) to trust, rely on (with dative of person or thing)

(perfect passive, πέπεισμαι, post-Epic) to believe, trust (with dative)

Which, I believe, adds necessary nuance to that "obey" and gets closer to being convinced there is a reason to trust, believe, rely on the person or school or "authority" (αρχή) by which one chooses to live one's life.

Post by "Cassius" of April 26, 2024 at 8:34 AM

My preliminary comments are:

At the very least one observation that goes along with the discussion is that Epicurus was long dead even when that was written, so he was not around to give orders, nor does there seem to have been a strict passing of "authority." I would certainly personally not trust a subsequent head of the school as much as I would trust Epicurus himself. The more time that passed after Epicurus died, the more and different arguments that would have arisen requiring variations on the original responses.

I would also see an analogy to seeing Epicurus as "a god" or even a "father figure" as Lucretius discusses -- gods don't intervene to tell us what to do, they serve as examples that we emulate as best we can. Father's sometimes try to intervene, but the "father figure" I would suggest is generally associated with the idea of giving wise advice to be followed as best the child can apply it. And when Philodemus was writing Epicurus wasn't around to be the kind of father who demands to be obeyed.

At the same time, there is no doubt in my mind that some kind of uniformity of message is necessary if one is to be logically thought of as an Epicurean. Epicurus' logic was as rigorous as anyone else's, and once a core doctrine was established with confidence (as opposed to subsidiary ideas where "waiting" and keeping an open mind between apparently valid alternatives is appropriate) then logical consistency requires general acceptance of those views. It's very possible to be friendly and accepting of those with differing views in many subjects, especially with students during a learning process. But if being considered an Epicurean means anything, it means some kind of agreement with core doctrines. And if one is running a school or any kind of organization, then it's inherent in the organization that there is

going to be some kind of line between what is and what is not acceptable. I can't imagine Romans and most Greeks taking much of anything "on authority." The Pythagoreans seem to be an exception, and we see Cicero himself arguing against that point of view in his philosophical works. But at the same time, words and ideas have to mean something, and we do the best we can to be clear when we use them. The word "Epicurean" is not infinitely flexible, nor does it mean only that one wants to be "happy" or that one finds "pleasure" enjoyable.

We're going to rightly recoil against aggressive claims of authority since for 2000 years we've lived in a world ruled by oppressive religions. But the remedy to oppression isn't total abandonment of standards, randomness, and absence of consistency, it's well thought out standards based on sound evidence and sound reasoning. And that does mean eventually coming to conclusions, not reverting to skepticism and holding that no conclusions are possible.

Post by "Don" of April 26, 2024 at 11:57 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

At the very least one observation that goes along with the discussion is that Epicurus was long dead even when that was written, so he was not around to give orders, nor does there seem to have been a strict passing of "authority."

Well said, [Cassius](#) ! I see the αρχη "authority" as expressed in *πειθαρχησομεν* as more like "authoritative" in this case, like an "authoritative" research source. Even in *Sic Fac Omnia Tamquam Spectet Epicurus* "Do all things as if Epicurus were watching" the important word is *tamquam* "as if." Epicurus is NOT watching you. Epicurus has ceased to exist. You can read his texts (or at least some of them) and consider his advice as transmitted through his surviving texts. But we can't submit our choices TO Epicurus and have him pass judgement from some seat of authority.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I would also see an analogy to seeing Epicurus as "a god" or even a "father figure" as Lucretius discusses -- gods don't intervene to tell us what to do, they serve as examples that we emulate as best we can.

I also really like this observation. Even if Epicurus is seen as a "god" by Lucretius or the subsequent generations studying in the ancient Garden, you have hit the proverbial nail on the head. [Epicurean gods](#) don't interfere, interact, judge, etc. any aspect of human behavior.

Another reason I like the "idealist" over the "realist" idea of the [Epicurean gods](#). But I won't digress down that rabbit hole here.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

At the same time, there is no doubt in my mind that some kind of uniformity of message is necessary if one is to be logically thought of as an Epicurean.

Yes. And to the rest of that paragraph 👍

[Quote from Cassius](#)

But if being considered an Epicurean means anything, it means some kind of agreement with core doctrines. And if one is running a school or any kind of organization, then it's inherent in the organization that there is going to be some kind of line between what is and what is not acceptable.

And so it's a matter of what the "core doctrines" are. We do a good job of hashing those out on this forum.

I want to add my opinion of one aspect of this discussion...

There is no way to have the Garden be reborn in the modern era. There is no way that any group that calls itself "Epicurean" in the 21st Century CE can be considered *THE Epicurean Garden Reborn*. Not this forum, not other fora, not any Facebook group, not any Discord group, nor any other group of people has any legitimate imprimatur to assign the label of *The REAL Epicureans* to themselves to the exclusion of others. It's the "[no true Scotsman](#)" fallacy, just philosophically applied: "Well, no TRUE Epicurean would do/say XYZ." Other than the ancient, fragmentary texts, there was no Epicurean "apostolic" succession of authoritative scholarchs throughout history from the death of Epicurus through to our time to which questions of legitimacy can be addressed. And "apostolic succession" doesn't guarantee adherence to the original practices and beliefs of the founder. Look at the multitude of sects calling themselves "Christian"! The best we can do is come together with τὸν ὅμοιον σεαυτῷ "those like ourselves" and discuss how to apply Epicurean philosophy as we have come to understand it to the conduct of our lives.

All that said, I think we can come to an understanding generally how those Epicurean principles are to be applied *in a modern context*, but we will NEVER EVER EVER have something that is exactly like the ancient Garden. Nor would we want to, from my perspective. For one, I hope no one would condone the institution of slavery that was ubiquitous in the ancient world and taken for granted inside and outside the Garden. Yes, Epicurus welcomed enslaved people into the Garden and freed several of his enslaved people in his will: "Of my slaves I manumit Mys, Nicias, Lycon, and I also give Phaedrium her liberty." But note he said "of my slaves" - plural -

So there were more than those four. More than likely educated enslaved people were involved in the copying and dissemination of his writings throughout the ancient world. There's [a fascinating recent book on the role of enslaved scribes in the development of Christianity](#). We live in a different culture and society from that in which Epicurus lived and died and what was there cannot be replicated here without some - maybe even a lot - of negotiation with the cultural context in which the texts were written. I don't advocate proof-texting using the ancient writings, i.e., knowing what we want the texts to say and picking and choosing excerpts that support that position; but we have to let the texts say what they say.

And, I'll end with...

- I think there are many applicable teachings of Epicurus that CAN inform the conduct of our lives for the better...otherwise I wouldn't be here after 4+ years!
- I think there are numerous instances of Epicurus's teachings becoming common among modern, scientifically-minded, materialist people.
- I think making a commitment to "act as if Epicurus were watching" and to judge one's actions in light in Epicurus's philosophy can be admirable and helpful to one's practice. (And Epicurean philosophy is a practice... If you're trying to apply it, refine your behavior, choose wisely, etc., etc., you're practicing Epicurean philosophy.)
- I think gathering together with people that have a similar appreciation for and admiration of Epicurean philosophy can be a good thing for one's life.
- I think there is nothing wrong with frank speech and with discussing whether certain behaviors are in-line with Epicurean philosophy... while at the same time avoiding slipping into a simple "No True Epicurean" fallacy. The frank speech - per Philodemus - must always, however, be given in a way respectful of the receiver of that speech and mindful of their position, demeanor, level of understanding, etc.
- I think having discussions on the original meaning and intent of the ancient texts is an important way to understand how to apply those principles. Epicurus doesn't exist. We can't beseech him with prayer as if he's going to give the "final word" on a contentious point. We have to work it out for ourselves.

So that's my position, as of 11:57 AM on April 26, 2024... As Cassius always say, I reserve the right to revise and extend my remarks. 😊

Post by “Don” of April 26, 2024 at 5:18 PM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

Maybe Epicureanism was not intended as a guide for people trying to come up with their own recipes for their lives. Maybe Epicureanism was designed as yet another concealed ideology for people who are perfectly fine with buying a cookbook and never stray from its content.

Epicurus started teaching philosophy because he thought he had a system superior to all the others that were teaching during his time. He no doubt felt he had 'figured it out." I get the impression that one didn't join a school - did not seek out a school - to then "come up with their own recipes for their lives." To continue the metaphor, you liked the menu of the school. That's why you joined the school. You ate the food, learned the recipes, you tried to recreate the food at home, you got feedback from the chefs, repeat.

I don't think the "ideology" was concealed. I think the ideology - I'd say the teaching and tenets of the school - was completely on display, like a menu posted at the door of a restaurant. That's why people joined.

I want to state explicitly that there's nothing wrong with charting one's own course, taking a cafeteria approach to a life philosophy (to stay with the metaphor). Choosing dishes that work for the person. I took that approach myself in the past. However, I feel that starting with an established philosophy or religion or lifestyle gets you further down the road. It's not necessarily nefarious to want to use the cookbook from someone who appears to know how to cook.

Post by “Cassius” of April 26, 2024 at 5:24 PM

What you've just described Don is the major theme of Lucian's "[Hermotimus](#)" dialog. We've got to find some time at some point to make a recording of that and promote it.

I cannot recommend it highly enough. It is witty and fun to read and extremely helpful on this topic.

Post by “TauPhi” of April 26, 2024 at 8:58 PM

[Don](#) and [Cassius](#). Thank you for comments. Posts like that make me smile. Thanks. I won't be commenting on most of the points you brought up because I simply have nothing to add as I

find them really good. I'll focus on few things I want to add to, instead.

[Quote from Don](#)

I don't think the "ideology" was concealed. I think the ideology - I'd say the teaching and tenets of the school - was completely on display, like a menu posted at the door of a restaurant. That's why people joined.

I would think the same but something doesn't add up when I look closely. Despite the school encouraged the study of nature, which is as 'scientific' approach as it possibly could be at the time, the same school attracted people with unscientific, pious, almost cult like behaviour towards Epicurus and his teachings putting him in a weird position of some kind of a saviour, god or something like that. I called it a concealed ideology as I suspect something I don't know, or understand, was going on behind the scenes. On top of that, what was completely on display, also leaves me scratching my head sometimes. (yes, I'm thinking 'the real gods' in intermundia, for example). Materialistic school with pious students? Eternal gods made of matter? I guess you can cook a duck and duck a cook at the same time but it's kinda weird 😊

I'm not trying to belittle Epicureanism in any way, I simply try to understand what ancient Epicureanism was really like. And I post my doubts here in hopes of getting stuff clarified. That's why I'm grateful for anyone willing to spend time discussing things like that with me.

[Quote from Don](#)

I want to state explicitly that there's nothing wrong with charting one's own course, taking a cafeteria approach to a life philosophy (to stay with the metaphor). Choosing dishes that work for the person. I took that approach myself in the past. However, I feel that starting with an established philosophy or religion or lifestyle gets you further down the road. It's not necessarily nefarious to want to use the cookbook from someone who appears to know how to cook.

Absolutely agree. I am an eclectic (and an Epicurean friend at the same time) and it works for me. If someone chooses different approach, I can be only happy if their choice works for them. I'm not trying to prove my approach to be better. I don't think it to be better. What matters to me is that it's good for me and I share it with good intentions. Ultimately, it's none of my business if people use cookbooks on the nose or choose to spice their meals to their liking. It's their food, not mine.

Post by “Bryan” of April 27, 2024 at 8:07 PM

One of the tricks of "modern thought/education" is to make the student think they are coming up with the ideas themselves individually (and therefore hold those ideas more deeply) when in reality they really end up only believing and repeating what they have been told.

I believe that having new thoughts is very rare -- people are considered smart when they can repeat what they hear -- and most people have to struggle for years to even be able to repeat what they hear!

Widely accepted, promoted, and permitted modern ideas are mostly just re-packaged judeo-christianity -- everybody is the same, non-physical forces exist, the universe has a beginning, etc, etc... Given this, I like admit to myself that I am only a follower. But I am proud that I choose to follow someone who is an honest leader and not someone cynically manipulating the thought of the public in the same old and absurd ways.

Post by "Don" of April 27, 2024 at 11:39 PM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

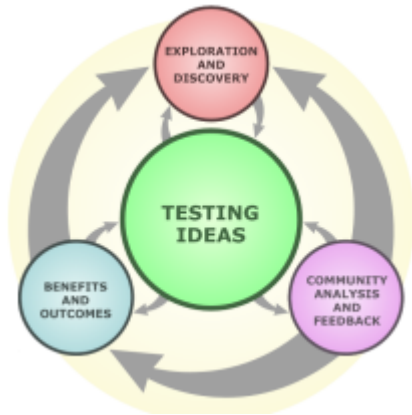
Despite the school encouraged the study of nature, which is as 'scientific' approach as it possibly could be at the time, the same school attracted people with unscientific, pious, almost cult like behaviour towards Epicurus and his teachings putting him in a weird position of some kind of a saviour, god or something like that. I called it a concealed ideology as I suspect something I don't know, or understand, was going on behind the scenes. On top of that, what was completely on display, also leaves me scratching my head sometimes. (yes, I'm thinking 'the real gods' in intermundia, for example). Materialistic school with pious students? Eternal gods made of matter? I guess you can cook a duck and duck a cook at the same time but it's kinda weird 😊

I'm not trying to belittle Epicureanism in any way, I simply try to understand what ancient Epicureanism was really like.

I think you raise some interesting and valid points, [TauPhi](#) . I appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts and to give anyone interested a chance to add to the discussion.

My first thought as I read your post was: Although we can see "scientific" precursors in ancient Greek philosophy, they weren't *really* doing science. To me, science as a discipline has specific techniques and ways of experimenting and collecting data. The University of California Berkeley hosts a website, [Understanding Science 101](#), which says: "all science relies on testing ideas by figuring out what expectations are generated by an idea and making observations to

find out whether those expectations hold true. Accepted scientific ideas are reliable because they have been subjected to rigorous testing. But, as new evidence is acquired and new perspectives emerge, these ideas can be revised." They also have a nice diagram that shows the nonlinear "[process of science](#)"



Neither Democritus nor Epicurus nor Aristotle nor any other ancient Greek or Roman really followed a scientific process. I think they contributed to the lineage that would eventually lead to science as a discipline, but they didn't "do science." They tried their best to make sense of the natural world around them (*Exploration and Discovery* in the diagram?). However, they didn't try to get feedback or analysis. They maybe tested their ideas in a rudimentary way but certainly didn't run experiments. They gathered the facts as best they could and, through introspection, "thought experiments," and elimination of possible causes (in their limited understanding) came up with the best explanation. Now, that said, i think Epicurus came up with some of the best explanations *for his time*. His intuition and personal introspective analysis was closer to right than wrong more often than not... that's why we're here discussing Epicurean philosophy 2,300+ years later. We feel it still has value millennia later. But he still got a number of things wildly incorrect when measured against modern scientific understanding.

Do I think Epicurus would change his mind about some of his ideas given a chance to learn modern explanations? Sure. He can be applauded for getting it right, but that "getting it right" is relative to all the other explanations out there at the time. He was a novel thinker, and maybe he was closer to right more often than not because everyone else had come up with bad ideas (to which he was responding) and with which Epicurus didn't agree. He wanted a better solution, and it just so happens that his alternative solutions were closer (certainly not exact) to how we understand the world now... by virtue of being opposed to the common knowledge of his day. That doesn't take anything away from the value of his writings nor does it make light of his contribution to helping others - well past his lifetime - live a more productive and happy life.

Okay, so that's Epicurus getting his study of nature right even though he wasn't doing science as we think of it... his approach was at least science-adjacent or pre-scientific.

Did Epicurus structure the Garden as a cult to himself? *Well...* He did institute the celebration of his birthday during his lifetime. He did institute the 20th celebration each month as a celebration of himself and Metrodorus... like the other monthly celebrations of the gods like Apollo, Aphrodite, etc. The question would have to be asked if he instituted those celebrations at the request of his students or did his student request to celebrate him and he provided a structure for them. From the texts, especially the fragments (and larger sections) of *On Nature*, Epicurus was definitely THE LEADER of his school and the one who wrote a 37-volume lecture course with HIM as the lecturer. There's also "Honoring a wise one is itself a great good to the one who honors." (ὁ τοῦ σοφοῦ σεβασμὸς ἀγαθὸν μέγα τῷ σεβομένῳ ἐστί.) The word used there means "to be moved by awe, fear, or respect for others or for their opinions;" and can also be used in a religious sense as honoring a god; to revere; to worship. Epicurus didn't seem to discourage this kind of respect, awe, etc.; however, he also reciprocated from time to time (IF I remember correctly). He also practiced this reverencing/honoring in relation to the gods himself in his participation in the rites and festivals, both in the Garden and in the city. It was a natural result of this "honoring the wise one" that he was basically deified after his death... he wasn't around to stop his students from doing it ("Do all things as if Epicurus were watching.") But I think [Cassius](#) made a good observation in an earlier post that the [Epicurean gods](#) didn't interfere in human affairs. It's metaphor at least. And "true piety" is showing respect/awe for the correct reasons as opposed to showing respect/awe out of fear for divine punishment or desire for divine gifts.

Calling Epicurus a "savior" or "god" as Lucretius does, honestly, doesn't really bother me... as long as I interpret it metaphorically. Epicurus "literally" "saved" people from ignorance and fear. That makes him, by definition, a savior.

As for the gods... I'm *still* not convinced that Epicurus believed there were giant humanoids living between world-systems, replenishing their atoms continuously.

All that is another reason I don't think we'll ever recreate the Garden as the Garden was during Epicurus's time or during its existence into the Roman era. We do NOT know nor can we know (without some wondrous trove of semi-complete papyri coming out of the new Herculaneum scroll-reading technology!) how the life of the Garden functioned and how students were recruited, taught, housed, etc. We have NO real idea what ceremonies were involved in the 20th celebrations. We have no idea how demanding Epicurus was in showing him (and Metrodorus and Hermarchus and Polyaeus) "reverence and awe." We really don't know how the practice of parrhesia (frank criticism) was carried out, although Philodemus (writing a century-and-a-half after Epicurus) does provide an invaluable text on that. There is too much we don't know.

What we do know - and what we have - is a systematic way of looking at the world and of living one's life to the fullest in pursuit of eudaimonia. I still think the substance of Epicurus's philosophy has something to say in the modern world. In some ways, I see our attempt at applying a 2-1/2 millennia old philosophy to our own lives as akin to the efforts by some "

[secular Buddhists](#)" to rid that philosophy of its supernatural and religious accretions and apply it to their lives. With all respect to [Cassius](#) (and I know why he says it! and kudos for that), we're all in some ways "[neo-Epicureans](#)." There's no way we can really be "classical Epicureans" in every sense of that phrase. For me, we're trying to stay true to the "spirit" of Epicurean philosophy without being beholden to the "letter" of Epicurean philosophy.

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

I am an eclectic (and an Epicurean friend at the same time) and it works for me.

And if it works, that's what's important. You're getting pleasure from your search and your path. 😊 Who knows? I may end up walking the path of the eclectic in the future again. It's certainly been a long and winding road to get to the Garden Path: Christian Mystic, "Druid," Buddhist, etc... I've had various descriptions of the path I was on before I got here. So far... I like the view from the Garden and plan to put my feet up and enjoy a cold beverage for awhile.

I'll end by saying I enjoy your company here and appreciate your willingness to engage in friendly discussion and to challenge from time to time. That opportunity to think through some issues is very helpful.

PS. Oh my! That ended up way longer than I intended. Mea culpa.

Post by “Godfrey” of April 28, 2024 at 1:29 AM

A quick thought prompted by [Don](#) 's post: did Epicurus create a cult around himself?

Did Plato? Aristotle? Epictetus? (&c) They were all the commanding personalities of their schools. Was Epicurus perhaps making his school friendlier, less intimidating? One way of doing that may have been the practice of monthly celebrations. In other words, practices that may seem cultish today may have served functions of which we are completely unaware.

Post by “Joshua” of April 28, 2024 at 2:20 AM

Quote

Did Epicurus structure the Garden as a cult to himself? Well... He did institute the celebration of his birthday during his lifetime. He did institute the 20th celebration each month as a celebration of himself and Metrodorus... like the other monthly celebrations of the gods like Apollo, Aphrodite, etc. The question would have to be asked if he instituted those celebrations at the request of his students or did his student request to celebrate him and he provided a structure for them.

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Did Plato? Aristotle? Epictetus? (&c) They were all the commanding personalities of their schools. Was Epicurus perhaps making his school friendlier, less intimidating? One way of doing that may have been the practice of monthly celebrations. In other words, practices that may seem cultish today may have served functions of which we are completely unaware.

I was somewhat interested to learn, after reading Cicero's condemnation on this point, that Plotinus--the founder of Neoplatonism in the 3rd century AD--was adamant that his birthday not be celebrated, and that his portrait not be carved or painted;

Quote

Plotinus, the philosopher our contemporary, seemed ashamed of being in the body.

So deeply rooted was this feeling that he could never be induced to tell of his ancestry, his parentage, or his birthplace.

He showed, too, an unconquerable reluctance to sit to a painter or a sculptor, and when Amelius persisted in urging him to allow of a portrait being made he asked him, 'Is it not enough to carry about this image in which nature has enclosed us? Do you really think I must also consent to leave, as a desired spectacle to posterity, an image of the image?'

In view of this determined refusal Amelius brought his friend Carterius, the best artist of the day, to the Conferences, which were open to every comer, and saw to it that by long observation of the philosopher he caught his most striking personal traits. From the impressions thus stored in mind the artist drew a first sketch; Amelius made various suggestions towards bringing our the resemblance, and in this way, without the knowledge of Plotinus, the genius of Carterius gave us a lifelike portrait. [...] Counting sixty-six years back from the second year of Claudius, we can fix Plotinus' birth at the

thirteenth year of Severus (A.D. 204-5); but he never disclosed the month or day. This was because he did not desire any birthday sacrifice or feast; yet he himself sacrificed on the traditional birthdays of Plato and of Socrates, afterwards giving a banquet at which every member of the circle who was able was expected to deliver an address.

--Porphyry, *De Vita Plotini*

Jehovah's Witnesses also refrain from the celebration of birthdays, and this includes declining to celebrate Christmas.

Post by “Cassius” of April 28, 2024 at 5:51 AM

Lot's of good comments above but to comment on only two:

[Quote from Don](#)

Do I think Epicurus would change his mind about some of his ideas given a chance to learn modern explanations? Sure.

I think it is important (for me at least) to be clear that the areas where he would change his mind involve relatively insignificant speculations on operations of nature which he knew were open to revision. On the "more philosophical" matters of ethics and epistemology I don't think he would have any reason to revise much at all.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Was Epicurus perhaps making his school friendlier, less intimidating?

That's a very good point that I haven't seen anyone suggest before, and which had not occurred to me. What appears to us to be "cult-like" behavior might be viewed as a significant "lessening" or "freeing" of attitudes - almost certainly so in comparison with the Pythagoreans. We don't really know what the everyday attitudes were within the schools of the time period, and even today we have examples of professional teachers who are very intimidating and allow no dissent within their classrooms. Joshua's cite to Plotinus is something i've never heard either and helps a lot in thinking about these issues.

Post by “Don” of April 28, 2024 at 9:01 AM

Ya'll have been active while I was asleep 😊 Some great posts.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

practices that may seem cultish today may have served functions of which we are completely unaware.

Completely agree. Without the everyday cultural context, it's almost impossible to put ourselves fully in the mindset of an ancient person. As one example, what did Epicurus feel and think when he was participating in the city festivals (other than gaining pleasure from it)? And the "funeral offerings to my father, mother, and brothers" are specifically called ἐνάγισμα (enagisma) which [one source describes](#) as "enagizein, enagisma and enagismos are particular to hero-cults and the cult of the dead." (Lots of interesting info in that source for sacrifice and ritual. I may have referenced it in the past.)

[Quote from Joshua](#)

I was somewhat interested to learn, after reading Cicero's condemnation on this point, that Plotinus--the founder of Neoplatonism in the 3rd century AD--was adamant that his birthday not be celebrated, and that his portrait not be carved or painted

Wow! THAT is a great find, [Joshua](#) ! That information is completely new to me and certainly does shed an interesting light on Epicurus's decision to celebrate his birthday, both during his life and in perpetuity after his death!

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think it is important (for me at least) to be clear that the areas where he would change his mind involve relatively insignificant speculations on operations of nature which he knew were open to revision. On the "more philosophical" matters of ethics and epistemology I don't think he would have any reason to revise much at all.

Agreed. My point was "If Epicurus learned modern atomic theory and related findings..." Epicurus's atomic theory and the modern [Standard Model](#) BOTH posit a material, non-supernatural universe. To me, Epicurus's ethics and epistemology rest on his physics (AND I have you, [Cassius](#) , to thank for that understanding!) which set out the general view that we live in that kind of universe. Even if the details of the physics are different, both Epicurus and modern scientists would agree - from my perspective - that we do indeed live in a world uncreated by gods, governed by understandable principles, and composed of matter and/or energy (depending on what level you want to concentrate).

Post by “Godfrey” of April 28, 2024 at 12:40 PM

Quote from Joshua

This was because he did not desire any birthday sacrifice or feast; yet he himself sacrificed on the traditional birthdays of Plato and of Socrates, afterwards giving a banquet at which every member of the circle who was able was expected to deliver an address.

--Porphyry, *De Vita Plotini*

So apparently feasting and sacrifices were part of birthday celebrations for Plato and Socrates. Does this make them cultish? If it makes the Epicureans cultish, they're not alone.

Great cite [Joshua](#) !

Post by “Don” of April 28, 2024 at 1:48 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

So apparently feasting and sacrifices were part of birthday celebrations for Plato and Socrates.

Evidently....

[Quote from Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies - Dr. Nagy](#)

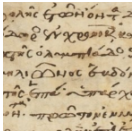
Their custom was to celebrate the birthday of Socrates on the sixth day of the month Thargelion, which by their reckoning coincided with his death day. And they celebrated by engaging in Socratic dialogue, which for them was the logos that was resurrected every time people engage in Socratic dialogue.

Gregory Nagy is an authoritative source, too. The Center has some great resources.

PS. And I'm going to do a little horn-toting and put a link to my paper on Epicurus's birthday:

File

[**Epicurus’s Birthday: The 7th, 10th, or 20th of Gamelion - Mystery Solved**](#)



This paper outlines the reasons to accept that Epicurus was born on the 20th day of the month of Gamelion.



Don

December 26, 2022 at 12:07 AM

Post by “TauPhi” of April 28, 2024 at 9:14 PM

My (I hope, at least) thoughts [Bryan](#) 's post #21.

[Quote from Bryan](#)

One of the tricks of "modern thought/education" is to make the student think they are coming up with the ideas themselves individually (and therefore hold those ideas more deeply) when in reality they really end up only believing and repeating what they have been told.

That's an interesting view. The first question that pops into my head is why would educators go to great lengths creating a system aimed at tricking people into becoming repeating mindless automatons? What is so beneficial in having sterile societies? And how any progress would be possible? When I was around 10 years old I was blown away when I discovered what my 1 Mhz Commodore 64 personal computer could do. Now I'm typing this text on a laptop with processing power 2000 times higher. That increase hasn't magically materialised by repetition and belief of the same old ideas.

[Quote from Bryan](#)

I believe that having new thoughts is very rare -- people are considered smart when they can repeat what they hear -- and most people have to struggle for years to even be able to repeat what they hear!

I guess new groundbreaking, world-shattering thoughts are very rare but we all have so many thoughts each day that even if only a fraction of them can be considered 'new' to us, I'd argue the rarity of personal new thoughts. Today my niece thought to dip a sausage in a strawberry yogurt. Probably not a 'new' idea worldwide but it was new to her. She quickly realised it was a

bad one.

Also, if people are considered smart solely for their ability to repeat, I would question the smartness of the 'considerators'.

[Quote from Bryan](#)

Widely accepted, promoted, and permitted modern ideas are mostly just re-packaged judeo-christianity -- everybody is the same, non-physical forces exist, the universe has a beginning, etc, etc...

I don't think I know even one person who would claim that everybody is the same. I can clearly hear a ghost of my dead grandfather complaining that nobody pay any attention to him and I'm pretty sure the widely accepted view regarding the universe is: 'We don't know. We have some theories but we can't really tell.'

[Quote from Bryan](#)

Given this, I like admit to myself that I am only a follower. But I am proud that I choose to follow someone who is an honest leader and not someone cynically manipulating the thought of the public in the same old and absurd ways.

I had pleasure talking to you more than once, [Bryan](#) . You're not just a follower. You think, you wonder and you say interesting things your honest leader didn't even have a chance to come up with. My point is, please reconsider if you're not a bit too harsh with the assessment of the world around you. The world is obviously not perfect since strawberry yogurt doesn't go well with sausages but the public contains a lot of individuals willing to dip stuff in other stuff until some good stuff emerges.

Post by “Little Rocker” of April 28, 2024 at 9:55 PM

Not so weird, really: "Washington's Birthday was the first federal holiday to honor an individual's birth date. In 1885, Congress designated February 22 as a holiday for all federal workers. Nearly a century later, in 1971, the Uniform Monday Holiday Law changed the date to the third Monday in February. The position of the holiday between the birthdays of Washington and Abraham Lincoln gave rise to the popular name of Presidents Day." --National Archives

Post by “Don” of April 29, 2024 at 6:34 AM

From a quick search at Perseus:

Diogenes Laertius, Lives 4.6.41

Arcesilaus

[Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, BOOK IV, Chapter 6. ARCESILAUS \(c. 318-242 B.C.\)](#)

The most virulent attacks were made upon [Arcesilaus] in the circle of Hieronymus the Peripatetic, whenever he collected his friends to keep the birthday of Halcyoneus, son of Antigonus, an occasion for which Antigonus used to send large sums of money to be spent in merrymaking.

Diogenes Laertius, Lives 6.8.101

Menippus

[Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, BOOK VI, Chapter 8. MENIPPUS](#)

However, the writings of Menippus the Cynic are thirteen in number : [including] A book about the birth of Epicurus ; and The School's reverence for the twentieth day.

Plutarch, Quaestiones Convivales 8.1

Question I. CONCERNING THOSE DAYS IN WHICH SOME FAMOUS MEN WERE BORN

[Plutarch, Quaestiones Convivales, Book 8., chapter 1](#)

ON the sixth day of May we celebrated Socrates's birthday, and on the seventh Plato's; and that first prompted us to such discourse as was suitable to the meeting...

Post by “Eikadistes” of April 30, 2024 at 2:29 PM

(For what it's worth, [Cassius](#) I'd love to represent myself with that "I Too Am an Epicurean" badge as shown beneath your profile picture in these threads.)

Post by “Cassius” of April 30, 2024 at 3:40 PM

Thank you for asking Twentier and you now have that trophy. It's still a little bit of a work in progress, and I have more thinking to do about how to implement it, which I'll probably make another post about before too long.

Post by “Don” of April 30, 2024 at 6:22 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Thank you for asking Twentier and you now have that trophy.

Hey! Over here! 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 30, 2024 at 6:59 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Thank you for asking Twentier and you now have that trophy.

Hey! Over here! 😊

I am sort of on the fence...because some mornings I wake up and say to myself: "I too am a Hedonist"... 😊

Post by “Cassius” of April 30, 2024 at 7:05 PM

Well I have an easy remedy for that -- you can start a "Hedonism" forum and create an icon of people holding hands with the Cyreniacs!

But that will limit you to the physical pleasures of the moment!



Post by “Pacatus” of May 9, 2024 at 6:33 PM

Not on point to the questions asked, but a plea for a revitalized Epicureanism for the modern day:

“The wasteland grows,’ wrote Nietzsche over a century ago. ‘Woe to him who hides wastelands within.’ Since then, the wastelands have grown ever more indiscriminately, both within and without. Our social and spiritual lives wither on our cell phone screens. Our cities, habitats, and public arenas suffer from a blight whose causes remain obscure while the effects are all-too-evident. The “little garden” of the human spirit falls into disrepair.

“The term ‘little garden’ alludes to *Ho Kepos*, or the small privately owned garden where in 306 BC Epicurus started one of the most influential and long-lived schools of antiquity. He lived in darkening times similar to ours, when the public and political spheres of Athenian democracy had fallen into decay and degradation. Greek philosophers before him—starting with Aristotle—believed that human happiness was possible only within the polis and the activities of citizenship. Epicurus instead believed that happiness had to be sought far from the folly and factionalism of the public realm. That is one reason he founded his school just outside the walls of Athens.

“Our age is badly in need of a strong dose of creative, revitalized Epicureanism, for Epicurus offers us a philosophy of how people can, on their own initiative, create little wellsprings of happiness in the midst of the wasteland.”

Robert Pogue Harrison, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/epicurus-for-our-time/>

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of September 22, 2024 at 6:22 AM

Don't you have to be rich to be an Epicurean?

It depends, being rich for an Epicurean could be defined as having pleasure and avoiding pain.

How many rich people, who allow their unnatural desires and unnecessary to seek the next thrill can't sit down with friends and talk?

Now I'm not a stoic, having more money is desirable but not at the cost it sometimes comes with.

You only have to be rich enough to have food and friends + a few good stories to tell

Epicureanism doesn't offer anything "positive" like Stoicism or Buddhism offers. What do you offer to compete with those?

Epicurean philosophy firstly doesn't require to believe a strange metaphysic, that the cosmos is ordained towards the Good or that we are in an endless cycle of rebirth and death for aeons.

Instead it starts with brute facts and goes from there. It only requires you to trust your senses, to trust that you have within you everything you need to choose pleasure and avoid pain.

Epicurean philosophy takes a wholesome look at humans and doesn't think our natural tendencies are bad but rather quite good.

What if your life isn't "together" and you don't have time to read philosophy? Why would someone like that spending any time discussing Epicurus?

Who's life is completely together? To read epicurus you don't need to sludge through centuries of metaphysical vomit but just a few hours, who can't afford to read Emily Austin or some other introduction?

As to why, well it's quite different then anything else, it doesn't require you to believe anything that can't be experienced, it doesn't require any negative theology apophatic theology etc...

Why don't you ever discuss "meaningfulness" because I've been convinced that's what I should want out of life?

I don't think there is a ultimate meaning to life, meaning comes from experiences namely pleasurable experiences. Pleasure isn't a dirty word, it's wholesome.

How do you expect me to understand Epicurus when he approaches so many things so differently than what I am familiar with at church or in the workplaces?

Unfortunately we live in a time where Aristotle, Plato and Thomas Aquinas have won. Teleology seems to in people's minds at all times. However even from an Epicurean pov, these people at church are still seeking pleasure, the pleasure of community, working together and ultimately the pleasure of some after life. So it's not that different, we just say toss the fear of death, toss the fear of "am I one of the elect or not because I want to have sex?"