

New "Medium" Post Referencing Epicurus and "Living For Pleasure"

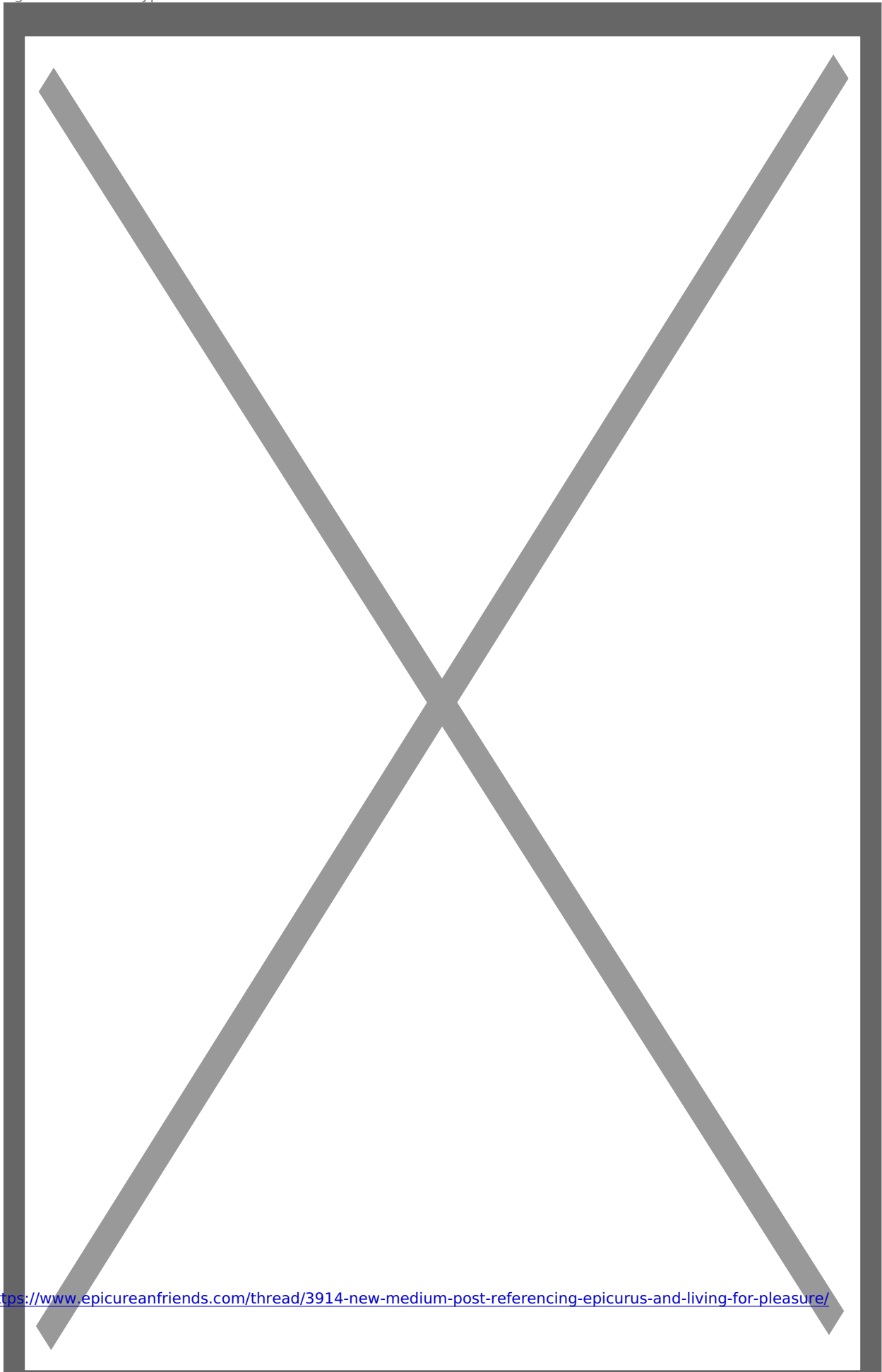
Post by "Cassius" of June 18, 2024 at 12:21 PM

Here's a new and good article referencing the benefits of Emily Austin's "Living For Pleasure." The writer goes through his background first through fundamentalist religion, and then to Buddhism, and having drunk so heavily from those waters it's not surprising that there are a couple of statements that probably need a little tweaking from a strictly Epicurean point of view.

One, for example, is where he says "From Epicurus I learned that eternal life, as well as being impossible, is also undesirable." Well I am not so sure that's stated precisely right. Of course as a human being, it's undesirable for us to obsess over yearning for eternal life, *because* it's impossible for us to get, and I feel sure that's what he means. But Epicurus was a big picture thinker, and he didn't think that eternal life is undesirable for the gods, so I would draw a line between saying flatly that something is "undesirable per se" as against "undesirable because it's impossible for us." Someone who's new to the philosophy might think it weird that we shouldn't even wish to live forever if we could attain it, and so I wouldn't imply that Epicurus thought the gods don't get a benefit from living forever. The problem in a desire for humans that leads to more pain than pleasure -- is that it leads to more pain than pleasure -- and not that the desire is undesirable *per se* because it's "wrong" or violates some absolute rule.

But my tweaks to the article would be relatively few. It's very good article, and it brings to mind many of the issues we regularly discuss. All of us incorporate a lot of scars and tendencies from our pasts that take time to work through and articulate. This is a good article to show how much progress someone can make with just a *little* good influence from a single book. Sounds like he just read Dr. Austin's book recently, and even in short time the distance he's already come from shows how much good her book can do.

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[Letting Go of the Need to Live Forever](#)

I grew up in rural England singing, very sweetly, Christian hymns in primary school. It was a carefree childhood filled with happiness...

medium.com

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 18, 2024 at 4:01 PM

This article by Thompson is somewhat typical of pop-psychology / self-help articles, which aim to bring up tips for living well.

And so it brings in a feeling of eclecticism, for example when it mentions Sam Harris, and further ideas.

Overall there is a chance that it may end up causing someone misunderstand some of the deeper details of Epicurean philosophy.

And this struck me as an odd thing to think, unless you were sick on your deathbed:

Quote

In Epicurean terms, the desire to live also falls on this spectrum. *Tomorrow* can be thought of as an Extravagant desire. We would welcome it and enjoy it if it comes, but it's not Essential. All our tomorrows are extravagances.

So that gives an idea of not to be concerned about the future, and it seems contradictory a few paragraphs further down by saying you will consider yourself like a future friend.

Quote

Secondly, to avoid suffering and seek pleasure *for ourselves in the future*. This means balancing things that might be enjoyable in the moment with the suffering that might bring down the line. You can almost think of your future self like a friend, and think of how your actions might affect them.

And also the part which talks about "needs" has some issues that muddy up the waters. I may have more to say on that later.

Edit note: Edited this greatly to increase clarity at 4:32pm ET.

Post by “Cassius” of June 18, 2024 at 4:33 PM

You're making some good points Kalosyni and i hope you will elaborate on them because I gather you have some Buddhist background and there are good questions here to dig into.

I glanced at the writer's other blog entries and I gather he is more of a computer person than a philosophy commentator, so it would be good to give as much constructive feedback as possible. There are numbers of flags in the article well worth commenting on.

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 18, 2024 at 4:34 PM

I just now edited my post above (post number 2) to create more clarity.