

# Welcome Sam\_Qwerty!

**Post by "Cassius" of July 22, 2025 at 6:24 PM**

Welcome @Sam\_Qwerty !

## **There is one last step to complete your registration:**

All new registrants must post a response to this message here in this welcome thread (we do this in order to minimize spam registrations).

You must post your response within 24 hours, or your account will be subject to deletion.

**Please say "Hello" by introducing yourself, tell us what prompted your interest in Epicureanism and which particular aspects of Epicureanism most interest you, and/or post a question.**

This forum is the place for students of Epicurus to coordinate their studies and work together to promote the philosophy of Epicurus. Please remember that all posting here is subject to our [Community Standards and associated Terms of Use](#). Please be sure to read that document to understand our ground rules.

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

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

One way you can be assured of your time here will be productive is to tell us a little about yourself and your background in reading Epicurean texts. It would also be helpful if you could

tell us how you found this forum, and any particular areas of interest that you already have.

You can also check out our [Getting Started](#) page for ideas on how to use this website.

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

["Epicurus and His Philosophy"](#) by Norman DeWitt

[The Biography of Epicurus by Diogenes Laertius](#). This includes the surviving letters of Epicurus, including those to [Herodotus](#), [Pythocles](#), and [Menoceus](#).

["On The Nature of Things"](#) - by Lucretius (a poetic abridgement of Epicurus' "On Nature"

["Epicurus on Pleasure"](#) - By Boris [Nikolsky](#)

The chapters on Epicurus in [Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks On Pleasure."](#)

[Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section](#)

[Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section](#)

The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda - [Martin Ferguson Smith translation](#)

[A Few Days In Athens" - Frances Wright](#)

Lucian Core Texts on Epicurus: (1) [Alexander the Oracle-Monger](#), (2) [Hermotimus](#)

[Philodemus "On Methods of Inference"](#) (De Lacy version, including his appendix on relationship of Epicurean canon to Aristotle and other Greeks)

"The Greeks on Pleasure" -Gosling & Taylor Sections on Epicurus, especially the [section on katastematic and kinetic pleasure](#) which explains why ultimately this distinction was not of great significance to Epicurus.

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

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

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

Welcome to the forum!

# Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean

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

## Our Posting Policy At EpicureanFriends.com:

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

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



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

**Nothing can be created  
from nothing.**

**Nature has no gods over  
her.**

**Do not assign to the  
gods anything that is  
inconsistent with  
incorruption and  
blessedness.**

**Death is nothing to us.**

**There is no necessity to  
live under the control of  
necessity.**



**He who says "Nothing  
can be known" knows  
nothing.**

**All sensations are "true."**

**Virtue is not absolute or  
an end in itself - all good  
and evil consists in  
sensation.**

**Pleasure is the guide of  
life.**

**By "Pleasure" we mean  
all experience that is not  
painful.**

**Life is desirable, but unlimited time contains no greater  
pleasure than limited time.**

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**Post by "Cassius" of July 22, 2025 at 6:26 PM**

Welcome Sam Qwerty and Thank you for being persistent in getting registered! For our existing members, I have already heard from Sam and have heard just a little about his background.

Sam, if you'll introduce your background to the group I feel sure you will find that this is a supportive environment for studying Epicurus.

Welcome aboard.

## Post by “Don” of July 22, 2025 at 8:41 PM

Welcome aboard!!

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## Post by “Sam\_Qwerty” of July 22, 2025 at 9:31 PM

Yes, well it is a long story. I was raised Catholic. When my Grandma was getting sick I would take her to church. I really wanted to believe but there was always a little voice in the back of my head that was telling me it was bullshit. After she died I stopped going to Catholic Church and became a Pagan. I was a pagan and not an atheist because I still wanted to believe. I was fascinated by ancient Greece so I started reading about Greek gods and started following a path that combined Platonism with Greek paganism.

There were points when I really did convince myself that it was true. Platonism, especially neoplatonism can be very complex, and that completely somehow made it seem more plausible in my mind. But I never could bring myself to believe in literal gods. You can say that the Ocean is Poseidon metaphorically, but the notion of some bearded old man with a trident ruling the waves is preposterous in my opinion.

Anyway, pure atheism seems pretty cold. I mean, yeah, we are all gonna die, and civilizations rise and fall, but at the end of the day, I'm not a nihilist. I'd rather have my life be about pleasure than virtue or duty or spend it whining about the meaninglessness of existence. Just an aside. But Archie my dog never worries about the meaninglessness of his life. He is happy if he gets his walkies, playtime, and treats.

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## Post by “Cassius” of July 22, 2025 at 10:13 PM

[Quote from Sam\\_Qwerty](#)

but at the end of the day, I'm not a nihilist.

[Quote from Sam\\_Qwerty](#)

I'd rather have my life be about pleasure than virtue or duty or spend it whining about the meaninglessness of existence

Very very well stated Sam. Those comments are very close to why I personally got involved in Epicurean philosophy years ago and remain motivated today. To me, most modern "atheism" is sterile and totally unattractive, and does exactly what you reference - end up in nihilism and whining in self-pity about the supposed meaninglessness of existence. I think Epicurus saw exactly that too, and that that's neither true nor good enough for happy living.

Glad to have you here and look forward to hearing more from you. It can be a lonely world for people of these views and it is good to have other like-minded people to talk to.

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### **Post by “Martin” of July 23, 2025 at 2:42 AM**

Welcome Sam\_Qwerty!

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of July 23, 2025 at 9:39 AM**

Welcome to the forum @Sam\_Qwerty ! 😊

[Quote from Sam\\_Qwerty](#)

...meaninglessness of existence...

You may be interested in checking out this sub-forum, if you haven't yet already seen it:

[Answering the "Quest For Meaning" In Epicurean Terms](#)

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### **Post by “Adrastus” of July 28, 2025 at 6:13 AM**

I have similarly more or less dabbled in pagan milieu and practices, rejected the kind of ceaseless 'deconstruction' of some atheist culture into nihilism, absurdism and so forth, and by happy accident discovered the richness and efficacy of Epicurean philosophy and the friendliness of Epicurean community.

Welcome, welcome, welcome!

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### **Post by “Sam\_Qwerty” of July 30, 2025 at 7:12 PM**

Just to make sure I am understanding, many modern writers are saying that according to Epicurus, all real pleasure is the absence of pain, whereas Epicurus also valued the kind of pleasure that is marked by the presence of something. Perhaps pleasant sensations or good company. Am I understanding?

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### **Post by “Cassius” of July 30, 2025 at 7:45 PM**

#### [Quote from Sam\\_Qwerty](#)

Just to make sure I am understanding, many modern writers are saying that according to Epicurus, all real pleasure is the absence of pain, whereas Epicurus also valued the kind of pleasure that is marked by the presence of something. Perhaps pleasant sensations or good company. Am I understanding?

Not exactly.

Epicurus held that there are only two feelings, pleasure and pain, so strictly speaking, the absence of one IS the presence of the other, so "absence of pain" DOES mean "pleasure."

The tricky part is that there are those who want to make "absence of pain" sound like Buddhist or Stoic asceticism or detachment. They want to conclude that all that is necessary is to clear one's mind or force away all thoughts of strong emotion, and then as a matter of course you go straight to a feeling of the highest sort of pleasure imaginable. That is why we have [an article here by Elayne](#) arguing against concepts of "fancy pleasure." Every writer is different and getting into people's motives is difficult, but there are many reasons why people want to conclude that Epicurus didn't really advocate "pleasure" as that word is normally understood.

And they don't want to see the definition of pleasure expanded, as Epicurus did, they want to see it restricted, to write out the normal active pleasures of life. They want to write out of the philosophy all of the normal active pleasures - the sex, food, sports, joy, delight - that go along with "motion" (and therefore "kinetic" pleasure).

The downside to that for those who want to advocate for [classical Epicurean philosophy](#) as the ancients understood it is that if you equate "katastematic pleasure" with something that sounds like a form of mental and bodily nothingness, then no healthy normal common-sense person under about age 60 is going to accept such a position as reasonable. And there are lots of us over 60 who wouldn't accept that either!

So the challenge is to observe that what Diogenes Laertius really said is that Epicurus valued BOTH types of pleasure, both "active" and "stable." Now what "stable" really means is about as up for debate and personal preference as what the active pleasures mean, but what I would argue, and I think Gosling and Taylor and the rest document, is that all pleasure is pleasure, and that there are no 'favored by nature" types of activities except as to what translates in an individual person's experience as generating more pleasure than pain.

And of course the key is to remember that there are many types of pleasure, bodily and mental, and that Nature does not give us categories - nature only gives us feelings of pleasure and pain.

What Epicurus identified is that it is logically untenable to argue that "pleasure" as a term means the highest good if there are more than two alternatives. If there is a third category - a middle ground - a neutral state - then you've said that nature gives you THREE options, and you therefore need additional guidance on how to decide between them. If you have to be told by something other than the feeling of pain and pleasure which of the three is the best, then it is THAT KNOWLEDGE of how to choose between them that becomes the most important thing in life to have. That is a large part of Plato's argument against Pleasure in [Philebus](#).

So Epicurus extended the understanding of pleasure to ALL feelings in life - all experience - all awareness, which is not painful. And that's justified by the knowledge that there is no life after death, that life is short, that pleasure is desirable, and that being alive is itself necessary for you to experience pleasure.

That explains the answer to Chrysippus' hand challenge -- the Epicureans held that your hand or any other part of your body, when it is normal and painfree condition - is in a state of pleasure.

And to up the ante on the challenge, when you identify that 100% pleasure is the most pleasure you can have,, then when you say that your hand is pain free you are saying that it is experiencing 100% pleasure - which is the "LIMIT" of pleasure. And that deals with another of Plato's arguments. Plato had argued that if something could always be made better by adding more to it, then that thing has no "limit," and so you can never use such a thing as a goal

because you can never reach it.

Identifying pleasure as absence of pain means that there IS a limit to pleasure, and that limit is achieved when all pain is gone, and so the challenge made by Plato that pleasure has no limit is overcome.

Yes all of this is subtle, and takes attention and reasoning to figure out. But Epicurus was a philosopher battling Platonists and others who held that pleasure cannot be the goal of life. He was not fighting people who argued that the highest pleasure was to remove all active pleasure from your life, minimize your desires and your footprint to the slightest amount possible, and then clear your mind and detach yourself from reality. The Romans and Greeks would never have made such an absurdity popular, but today there is a large constituency for that point of view and they like nothing more than arguing that Epicurus is one of them.

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### **Post by “Sam\_Qwerty” of July 30, 2025 at 8:10 PM**

I know you recommend the book by Dewitt. However, I am not sure I would like to start with an academic textbook. I ordered the book. I have it on my bookshelf. But are there any modern books that explain this philosophy simply that have a correct understanding? I might get into textbooks or ancient writings after I know what they are about.

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### **Post by “Sam\_Qwerty” of July 30, 2025 at 8:11 PM**

Thanks for all the welcome messages. Would I be correct in saying that the gist of Epicureanism is that we live in a physical universe. This present life is all we have. Therefore any happiness we will ever have will be experienced in this life. And the key to happiness is to experience pleasure.

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### **Post by “Don” of July 30, 2025 at 8:14 PM**

Quote from [Sam\\_Qwerty](#)

are there any modern books that explain this philosophy simply that have a correct understanding?

Emily Austin's Living for Pleasure.

In my opinion, THE best accessible introduction to the philosophy for the interested general reader.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of July 30, 2025 at 11:21 PM**

[Quote from Sam\\_Qwerty](#)

Thanks for all the welcome messages. Would I be correct in saying that the gist of Epicureanism is that we live in a physical universe. This present life is all we have. Therefore any happiness we will ever have will be experienced in this life. And the key to happiness is to experience pleasure.

I think that's a good summary, but with maybe the next thought afterwards - which some find difficult - being that pleasure is something to be understood broadly, not limited to external stimulation, and that there is great pleasure to be found in many aspects of life which are difficult to appreciate fully without a coherent philosophy such as Epicurus provides.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of July 30, 2025 at 11:25 PM**

[Quote from Sam\\_Qwerty](#)

I know you recommend the book by Dewitt. However, I am not sure I would like to start with an academic textbook. I ordered the book. I have it on my bookshelf. But are there any modern books that explain this philosophy simply that have a correct understanding? I might get into textbooks or ancient writings after I know what they are about.

Given the way you ask this question, Don's answer is clearly the best one for you. Different people have different backgrounds and experiences and needs in the way they approach things. Emily Austin's book is very approachable and sounds like it will be a good match for you.

And among the "popular" books, hers is by far the best.

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**Post by “Adrastus” of July 31, 2025 at 11:22 AM**

I would also submit that Emily Austin's is indeed the best intro *book*. I recommend and give away copies to friends and amiable family as often as I pique interest in it. But you, good stranger, have the advantage as you have found the community, and I have found the Epicurean community forums and content to be of utmost importance not just in understanding the philosophy, but in thinking with the canon, or "doing" the philosophy. As well as, invaluable minutiae of ancient contexts combing through the extant material. The write ups, discussions, and a knowledgable community to engage with your own items of inquiry, and heck, even some of the meme content around here are really good at getting a more organic picture from many more types of discourse and presentation to engage with to apprehend Epicurean Philosophy well enough to glean the fruits during your stay in the Epicurean Garden.

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**Post by “Sam\_Qwerty” of July 31, 2025 at 3:53 PM**

When I "came out" as an atheist, I found out that the only thing I had in common with members of my pagan "tribe" was that we had the same dogma. Taking that away, I lost most of my friends. But I think imit might have been a cult. The only thing I am clear on right now is I don't believe in the supernatural. No gods. No magic. No life after death. No spirits and demons. Everything I have studied up to this point assumed the existence of the supernatural. So I find myself starting from scratch. Including my social life.