

The "Suggested Further Reading" in "Living for Pleasure"

Post by "Cleveland Okie" of January 21, 2026 at 10:25 PM

Reading books tends to be my main method for studying Epicureanism, although I do sometimes participate in this forum. By my count, I have read 15 books about Epicureanism so far. (I say "by my count" because deciding whether to list a title in my "Epicurean Books Read" list that keep involves some judgment calls; I count *Hellenic Philosophy* by John Sellars because I read it mostly to learn more about Epicureanism, but I don't count *The Swerve* by Stephen Greenblatt because I read it before I became interested in Epicureanism).

My favorite book about Epicureanism is *Living for Pleasure* by philosophy professor Emily Austin. I have read it three times and I suspect I will read it again.

Searching for a way to learn from Professor Austin besides reading her book over and over again, I have paid attention to the "Suggested Further Reading" section in the back of the book. I have now read most of the books she recommends and here are my notes, with the caution that I don't claim to be a scholar of Greek philosophy, just somebody with an interest in Epicureanism who hasn't been kicked out of this forum yet. I will list each title that Austin recommends and then offer a comment.

The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia. 1994. Translated and edited by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson.

As you might guess from the title, the book consists of modern English translations not only of Epicurus' surviving writings but also useful works by Cicero, Plutarch, etc. I keep a copy of my Kindle book on the Kindle app on my smartphone for ready reference, something I also do with Austin's book.

Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings, Inwood and Gerson again. I haven't read this yet, because my main interest is in Epicureanism, although I have come to understand it is useful and interesting to know about the historical context of Epicureanism. This book also is recommended by philosophy professor John Sellars, who I'll mention below.

Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*. Professor Austin suggests the Martin Ferguson Smith translation for readers who want prose, and the Ronald Melville translation for a verse rendition.

Professor Austin is of course correct in suggesting that any serious Epicurean should read Lucretius. I have not read either of these translations, simply because I already had a translation on my Kindle, one done by Ian Johnston.

Epicureanism, Tim O'Keefe, 2009. I thought this book was very good. Whereas the Austin book is aimed at the interested layman, O'Keefe seems to aim mainly at college students studying philosophy. That said, I found his book easier going than many other philosophy books. I plan to read it again soon.

When I emailed Professor O'Keefe (he is a philosophy professor at Georgia State University), I mentioned that I read his book because Professor Austin recommended it. He replied, "I think Emily Austin's book is just outstanding."

The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism, edited by James Warren.

This is a collection of 15 essays on various topics by a number of different scholars. I found 14 of the essays to be interesting and useful, although "Epicurean Philosophy of Language" by Catherine Atherton was too technical for me to follow. There's a wide range of topics and I suspect that most people on this forum would be interested in many of the essays. This is probably a good book to read after you've read a couple of the surveys, such as Austin's.

The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius, Gillespie and Hardie. I haven't gotten around to this one yet.

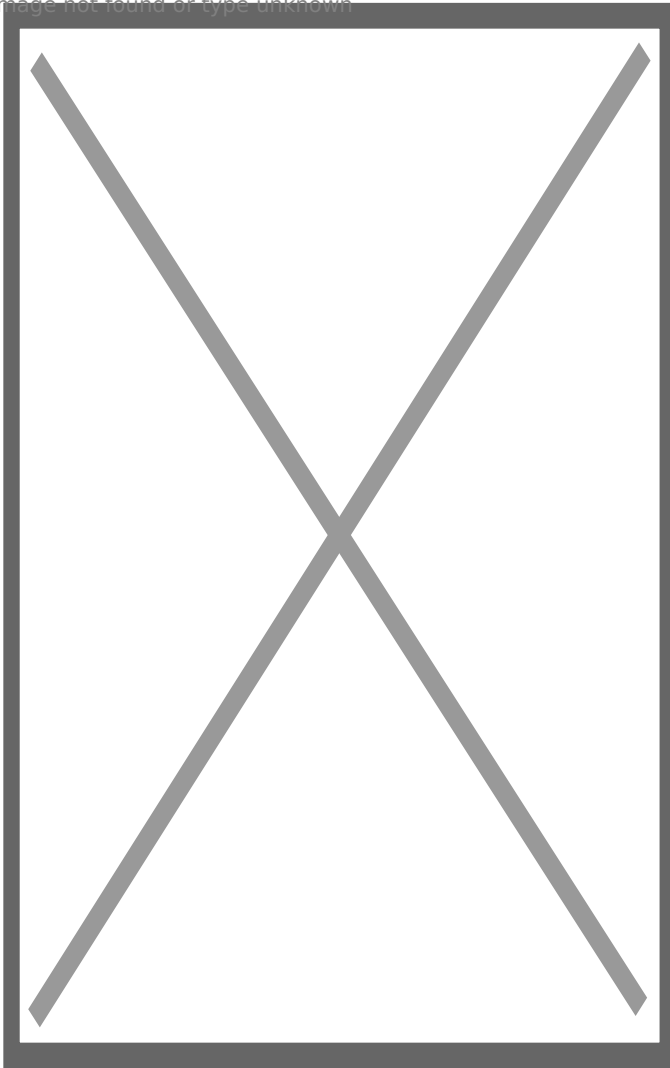
The Swerve, Stephen Greenblatt. A fun book. I read it before I became interested in Epicureanism. I was then mainly interested in book collecting and the recovery of ancient texts. Poggio Bracciolini is one of my heroes.

Hellenistic Philosophy, John Sellars. This book focuses mainly on Epicureanism, Stoicism and Skepticism, although he also lets you know that the Academics and Peripatetics were up to during the period. This is the most recent book I have read. I got interested in reading this book after I read *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* and realized I would understand Epicureanism better if I knew more about its context in the Hellenistic period. This is a good book and Sellars, despite his reputation as a Stoicism expert, is very lucid in discussing Epicureanism. I also like Sellars' short book, *The Fourfold Remedy*, which discusses Epicurean ethics.

I have a blog devoted to the writers Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea, and I have posted twice there about *Hellenistic Philosophy*, if anyone is interested.

Here is the main post on the book:

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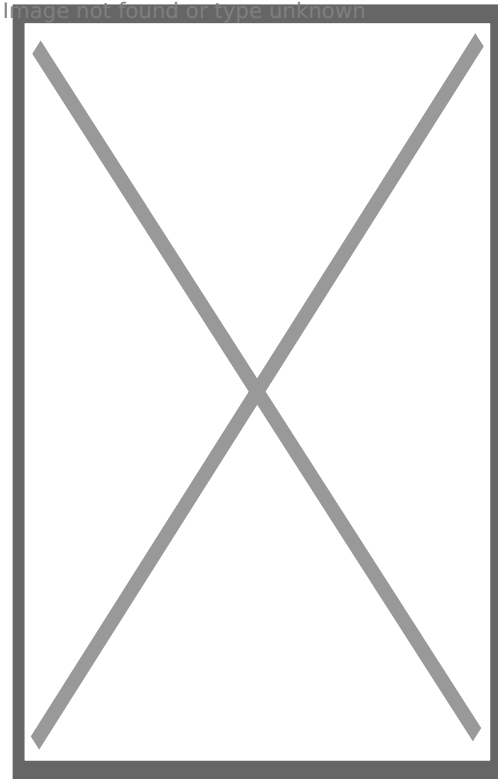


[An interesting philosophy book](#)

I have been reading an interesting book that I had my wife give me for Christmas: Hellenistic Philosophy by John Sellars. If you aren't fa...

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When I reached the end of the book, I discovered a fascinating appendix on encounters between Greek philosophers and their counterparts in India, Buddhists and Brahmins, so I did a separate blog post:



[Greek philosophers interacted with Buddhists and Hindus, back in the day](#)

I have already done a blog post on Hellenistic Philosophy by John Sellars. As I mentioned earlier, it focuses on three main philosophical...

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Cicero: On Moral Ends, edited by Julia Annas, translated by Raphael Woolf.

I haven't read this book, either. In his *Hellenistic Philosophy* book, Sellars recommends reading Cicero, although he adds other works are needed to provide a "balanced picture" of Epicureanism.

Post by "Matteng" of January 22, 2026 at 12:55 PM

Wow I have read almost the same books the last years ☐☐

And had similiar experiences.

Th Camridge Companion so good but yes some hard to read chapters which are lesser interesting for me.

„The Swerve“ I haven't read yet. It is a little bit older or ? Is its content still interesting and has valid ideas/ views about Epicurean Philosophy ? Would you recommend it ? Maybe I would read it next.

Post by “Cassius” of January 22, 2026 at 2:40 PM

Thank you Cleveland Oakie for taking the time to write up that review and adding it here!

Post by “Joshua” of January 22, 2026 at 8:24 PM

Quote

„The Swerve“ I haven't read yet. It is a little bit older or ? Is its content still interesting and has valid ideas/ views about Epicurean Philosophy ? Would you recommend it ? Maybe I would read it next.

I'm not very good about keeping up with the secondary literature, but *The Swerve* by Stephen Greenblatt was my main introduction to Epicureanism and I am always happy to write in his defense.

I first encountered Greenblatt's work as an under-graduate English/History major. He was (is?) the editor of the magisterial *Norton Anthology of English Literature* in many volumes, and this venerable anthology formed the backbone of the English Literature curriculum. This was a rather impersonal introduction, but we also read his biography of William Shakespeare (*Will in the World*), which a friend of mine thought was one of the better supplementary texts we studied that semester. So I graduated with at least a sense of Greenblatt's work, and recognized the name a few years later on the front of a paperback while I was looking for something new to read on my upcoming travels.

I have since listened many times to the audiobook narrated by Edoardo Ballerini (a great help with the pronunciation of the Italian names), and always with pleasure.

The Swerve does contain a chapter dedicated to an outline of Epicurean philosophy, which, though I might quibble here and there, I don't find at all objectionable. But that's not really what this book is about. It is a study of the loss, submergence, survival, and rediscovery of the literature, language, and culture of classical antiquity, as seen through the eyes of a group of

Italian Humanists of the Quattrocento who were trying to save what was left of the ancient past.

It tells of the lives, livelihoods, rivalries, vanities, and ambitions of men like Poggio Bracciolini, Leonardo Bruni, Lorenzo Valla, Marsilio Ficino, Coluccio Salutati, Niccolò de' Niccoli, Pier Paolo Vergerio, and many others.

Since several of these figures were prominent and learned scribes of the Papal Curia at the Vatican, the book also dwells on the faith and politics of the 15th century, the executions of Giordano Bruno, Jerome of Prague, and Jan Hus; and the trial of Antipope John XXIII, the schism of the church, as well as the [Council of Constance](#) that brought many of these matters to a head.

Since the common thread that runs through all of this is the rediscovery and recirculation of Lucretius' grand Epicurean poem, I certainly think Greenblatt's book is worth reading!

Post by “Joshua” of January 22, 2026 at 8:26 PM

Greenblatt was also invited to deliver a lecture connected with his book at the Getty Villa, which I also recommend watching!

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=mXqHOF1B808>

Post by “Cleveland Okie” of January 22, 2026 at 11:39 PM

[Matteng](#) I second Joshua's recommendation of *The Swerve*. Aside from its Epicurean interest, it is a really fun read.

If "Epicureanism in the Renaissance" is an interest for some of y'all, I would also recommend Ada Palmer's *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*. Palmer is a historian at the University of Chicago, also a science fiction novelist, also a musician, also a bunch of other things. She is a "Renaissance woman" in double meanings of the term; i.e., she specializes in the Renaissance, but also works at the high level in a variety of fields. I am pretty sure she says that she and Greenblatt showed each other's manuscripts to each other as they were working on their books.

As we seem to read a lot of the same things, here is a list of Epicurean books I have read so far, is there anything I have missed that you (or anyone else) would like to recommend?

Hellenistic Philosophy, John Sellars

The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism, James Warren, editor.

Epicurus and His Influence on History, Ben Gazur

The Fourfold Remedy: Epicurus and the Art of Happiness, John Sellars.

A Few Days in Athens; being the Translation of a Greek Manuscript Discovered in Herculaneum, Frances Wright

On the Nature of Things, Lucretius, Ian Johnston translator.

Epicureanism, Tim O'Keefe.

Tending the Epicurean Garden, Hiram Crespo.

The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia, Epicurus, Brad Inwood, Lloyd P. Gerson

Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance, Ada Palmer.

Living for Pleasure: An Epicurean Guide to Life, Emily Austin.

How to Be an Epicurean: The Ancient Art of Living Well, Catherine Wilson.

Epicureanism: A Very Short Introduction, Catherine Wilson. 11-2021

Epicurus and His Philosophy, Norman W. DeWitt.

EPICURUS and THE PLEASANT LIFE: A Philosophy of Nature Kindle Edition- November 30, 2022 - Revised and Expanded 2nd Edition, Haris Dimitriadis

Post by "TauPhi" of January 23, 2026 at 8:36 PM

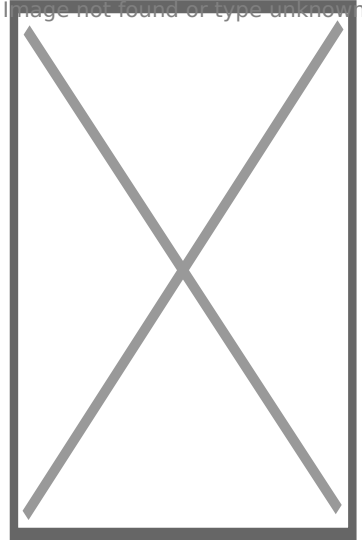
[Quote from Cleveland Okie](#)

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Hi [Cleveland Okie](#). Good to hear from you.

You've read a lot of secondary material on Epicurean Philosophy already so recommending you another contemporary book would make you read the same, rehashed ideas all over again. I'll try something more interesting. May I interest you in a book written in 1866 by **Frederick Albert Lange** called '*The History of Materialism and Criticism of its Present Importance*'? It's a huge volume dedicated to the development of philosophical materialism over the past 2 millennia but you absolutely don't need to read the whole thing. Antiquity is covered within the first 150 pages or so and this material will allow you to put Epicurean Philosophy in context to

better understand what made the philosophy possible at the time it was conceived. If you chose to continue reading past the first section, you probably won't be disappointed. The history of materialism is quite intriguing after the classical period as well. And since the book was written in 1866, it's in public domain and freely available on archive.org:



[The History Of Materialism : Frederick Albert Lange : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

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archive.org

Post by “Bryan” of January 23, 2026 at 10:17 PM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

'The History of Materialism and Criticism of its Present Importance'

This looks like good "seeing the forest through the trees" material, but we need an audio version... *Looking* at the whole forest is too tedious -- but it is easier to *listen* to the whole forest.

Post by “Cleveland Okie” of January 28, 2026 at 11:51 PM

Thank you for the suggestion, TauPhi! Appreciate it.