

# "Moral Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists." Review.

**Post by "Daniel" of March 31, 2019 at 6:12 AM**

Ten years before „The Swerve“, Benjamin Wiker published a book that covers much of the same ground: „Moral Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists“

[ref=src\\_1\\_fkmmnull\\_1?keywords=Moral+Darwinism%3A+How+We+Became+Hedonists&qid=1554026728&s=](https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/855-moral-darwinism-how-we-became-hedonists-review/)

Wiker and Greenblatt agree in their historical narrative of the modern world as a product of the turn away from The Christian cosmology of intelligent design to the Lucretian cosmology of evolutionary atomism. Greenblatt celebrates this historical turn as moral progress, while Wiker laments it as moral degeneration.

I will be posting some very revealing quotations.

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**Post by "Daniel" of March 31, 2019 at 6:16 AM**

From the cover:

"Abortion. Euthanasia. Infanticide. Sexual promiscuity. Ideas and actions once unthinkable have become commonplace. We seem to live in a different moral universe than we occupied just a few decades ago. Christian moral tenets are now easily dismissed and have been replaced with what is curiously presented as a superior, more magnanimous, respectful and even humble morality. How did we end up so far away from where we began? Can the decline be stopped? Ben Wiker, in this provocative and insightful book, traces the amazing story that explains our present cultural situation. Wiker finds the roots of our moral slide reaching all the way back to the ethical theory and atheistic cosmology of the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus."

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**Post by "Cassius" of March 31, 2019 at 6:23 AM**

41W1hSk0NL\_SX330\_BO1,204,203,200\_.jpg

For some reason this picture doesn't show up in the first post

- here it is.

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**Post by “Cassius” of March 31, 2019 at 6:39 AM**

I will await further info from Daniel before getting a copy of this book.

In the meantime, from the preview I can see the usual problem, and this will likely be a starting point for deconstructing his analysis:

sure such a high status.

For Epicurus pleasure consisted in freedom from disturbance. Two forms of disturbance stood out for Epicurus: the disturbance of God intervening in nature and the disturbance of an afterlife. For Epicurus, to allow that God

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### **Post by “Cassius” of March 31, 2019 at 6:46 AM**

Here, I think this FAR overstates the case as to Darwin being a "disciple" of Epicurus. Darwin is "the most potent formulation of that philosophy [Epicurus] to date?" That is way overstated!

Do we actually know that Darwin was either an explicit fan of, or quoted, Epicurus? We do know that Nietzsche was at least in certain respects a fan of Epicurus, but that Nietzsche was not a fan of Darwin. I have not read deeply into Darwin but my gut tells me that Nietzsche is right on this, and that Darwin probably does not deserve a lot of study by an Epicurean except to note Darwin's development of theories of nature that are not guided by supernatural beings, which is only one aspect of Epicurus.

If anyone has comment on this please include it either here or [in this separate thread on Darwin.](#)

the present.

Epicurus's most prominent disciple is without question Charles Darwin. Darwinism is not only the most recent incarnation of Epicurean philosophy but also the most potent formulation of that philosophy to date. Darwinism's significance consists in the purported scientific justification it brings to the Epicurean philosophy. But the science itself is weak and ad hoc. As

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### **Post by “Cassius” of March 31, 2019 at 6:56 AM**

This page purportedly contains the complete works of Darwin. A search for Epicurus turns up very little, and even less by Darwin himself. Maybe i am searching wrong- <http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/search...eetext=Epicurus>

I will post further Darwin-specific comments [in this separate thread on Darwin](#). And maybe this book on Moral Darwinism contains the link between Darwin and Epicurus.

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### **Post by “Hiram” of March 31, 2019 at 11:23 AM**

Darwin was Christian.

Lucretius could not have been a Darwinian for obvious reasons. He did posit natural selection, but not via Darwinian adaptation and evolution.

I do appeal to Darwinian theory when I explain the pleasure faculty here, because I feel that it sheds light on many aspects of Epicurean ethics:

<https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/2015/05/20/the...n-introduction/>

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### **Post by “Cassius” of March 31, 2019 at 1:45 PM**

Hiram you are much better read in Darwin than am I. Did Darwin ever even cite Epicurus or Lucretius approvingly in his main works for any aspect of his ethics or epistemology (or his physics)? Did Darwin even have an ethics that he promoted as proper, or is all the "Darwinian morality" stuff that people added on as their take on the logical implications.

But right at the start, if you indicate that he was clearly Christian and therefore believed in supernatural gods, then that's a huge point of division.

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### **Post by “Daniel” of March 31, 2019 at 3:54 PM**

Cassius, please do not get a copy of this book.

It comes from a very Christian conservative perspective, very unsympathetic towards Epicureanism.

It's just that I enjoy following J. S. Mill's advice ("He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that..."). When I research a topic I like reading the best arguments from the other side. Wiker claims that all contemporary moral debates are simply the result of the clash of the Christian moral universe with the Epicurean moral universe.

Regarding Darwin, Wiker doesn't claim that he was a follower of Epicurus, just that Darwinism is a modern type of Epicureanism, as opposed to Aristotelian Scholasticism, Cartesian Rationalism or German Idealism. The genealogy would be: Lucretius-Gassendi-Anglo Empiricist school of Bacon, Hobbes, Newton, Locke...till Darwin.

I will be posting all the interesting bits.

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### **Post by "Daniel" of March 31, 2019 at 3:57 PM**

The gist of the book is this:

Christians must see the world as intelligently designed by the divine Creator, who exercises providential care over human beings and who judges them in the afterlife as deserving heavenly rewards or hellish punishments for eternity. Christians can interpret many of the ancient philosophers - Platonists, Aristotelians, and Stoics - as teaching that the world is fundamentally mindful and purposive and thus supporting a Christian cosmology. But they can't do this with the atomistic cosmology of Epicurus and Lucretius, which must be seen as the fundamental rival to Christianity.

Moreover, Wiker argues, one must defend Christian cosmology if one wants to defend Christian morality. As a comprehensive account of the universe, every cosmology implies a morality, because every account of nature as a whole implies an account of human nature - the moral and intellectual life of human beings - as part of cosmic nature.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of March 31, 2019 at 11:07 PM**

Daniel how did you come across this book? Is it well known?

## Post by "Hiram" of April 1, 2019 at 11:53 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Hiram you are much better read in Darwin than am I. Did Darwin ever even cite Epicurus or Lucretius approvingly in his main works for any aspect of his ethics or epistemology (or his physics)? Did Darwin even have an ethics that he promoted as proper, or is all the "Darwinian morality" stuff that people added on as their take on the logical implications.

Darwin was a naturalist, not a philosopher. He did not elaborate ethical repercussions of his finding, as a scientist. He stayed within his realm, and only posthumous interpretations of his SCIENCE by philosophers have been done (sometimes leading to error, as in the case of Nietzsche's mis-understanding of evolution and adaptation via natural selection as if it led to a "superior" or "higher" man or form of life necessarily).

Darwinian "morality" (whatever that means) is an invention of post-Darwin intellectuals.

But note that in nature we see competition, but also cooperation, and that all life exists within **\*\*systems\*\*** that involve mutual benefit and symbiosis (mutual inter-dependence at many scales), so that so-called "social Darwinism" is a HUGE politically-inspired error. If there is anything that deserves to be called "social Darwinism", it's networks of mutual aid and mutual benefit.

Darwin does not cite Epicurus or Lucretius, as far as I know. He did follow the Lucretian method of FIRST observing nature, then reasoning explanations for what he sees, only based on what has been observed.

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## Post by "Daniel" of April 1, 2019 at 1:33 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Daniel how did you come across this book? Is it well known?

As far as I know, the book is not well known.

I had downloaded it - together with other titles, such as "Elemental Epicureanism" 😊 - on my kindle, a couple of months ago. I must have found the title intriguing, maybe because it comes

from a perspective which is not mine at all. I had started to read but found it boring.

Anyway, a few days ago I saw that Hiram made a reference to the book on FB, and that encouraged me to pick it up again.

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## **Post by “Daniel” of April 1, 2019 at 2:02 PM**

### INTRODUCTION:

"Why has contemporary science choose to ignore or dismiss the existence of a designing intelligence? Why has it sided with the materialist?..."

"...As I shall argue, modern science itself was designed to exclude a designer. Even more surprising, modern science was designed by an ancient Greek: Epicurus..."

"...The argument of this book is that the ancient materialist Epicurus provided an approach to the study of nature - a paradigm, as the historian of science Thomas Kuhn called it - which purposely and systematically excluded the divine from nature, not only in regard to the creation and design of nature, but also in regard to divine control of, and intervention in, nature..."

"...This secularization culminated in Darwinism because it was with Darwin that materialism, which had been slowly but surely permeating and re-forming the predecessor Christian culture, finally reached and devoured God the creator and the immortal human soul, leaving behind a completely Godless, soulless universe..."

"...Every distinct view of the universe, every theory of nature, necessarily entails a view of morality; every distinct view of morality, every theory about human nature, necessarily entails a cosmology to support it..."

"...The so-called culture wars are the result of this great conflict...Epicurean materialism and Christianity have been implacable foes since the very origin of Christianity...there is no possibility for compromise in the current moral debates between the rival sides..."

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## **Post by “Hiram” of April 1, 2019 at 2:36 PM**

Quote

"At one and the same time, we must laugh and philosophize" - Vatican Saying 41

This is where we are "laughing philosophers". We tear this false Christian narrative to shreds with laughter:

<https://eidolon.pub/swinish-herds-...ns-efdc9ca6db2d>

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### **Post by "Cassius" of April 1, 2019 at 5:35 PM**

I agree that Wiker came up with an interesting title in "Moral Darwinism" -- a title that probably lends the book more gravity than it deserves.

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### **Post by "Daniel" of April 2, 2019 at 12:31 PM**

LUCRETIUS, THE FIRST DARWINIAN.

"...The entire materialist account of human nature, society, morality and religion, which forms the stream of modernity flowing toward its culmination in Darwin, is found clearly and succinctly stated in Lucretius. Lucretius seems so modern because we are so Lucretian..."

"...For anyone even mildly familiar with modern evolutionary theory this is a remarkable passage (De Rerum Natura, 5.837-77)..."

(1) Random variation at the atomic level brings about a diversity of creatures at the level of species.

(2) Monsters (later called monstrosities by Darwin) do not survive because they cannot defend themselves, nor provide sustenance, nor procreate by the 'ways of Venus.'

(3) Whatever animals have survived must have been the most fit, having greater cunning, courage or quickness (or greater utility to human beings), and so are 'able by procreation to forge out the chain of the generations.'

(4) Like the monsters, those species that are less fit do not survive, for they 'lay at the mercy of others for prey and profit...until nature brought that kind to destruction,' that is, extinction..."

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## **Post by “Daniel” of April 2, 2019 at 12:40 PM**

### CHRISTIANITY VERSUS EPICUREANISM (I)

"...Whether we are Christian or not, it is simply true from the very beginning Christianity set itself completely against Epicureanism at all points. The victory of Christianity in the first five hundred years A.D. necessitated the defeat of Epicurean materialism. The two could not coexist..."

"...Nor could they coexist when Epicureanism was revised in the Renaissance...This, the antagonism between moral Darwinism and Christianity in the 19th century and beyond was and is simply a continuation of a very ancient animosity..."

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## **Post by “Cassius” of April 2, 2019 at 12:48 PM**

All of those a week reasonable and correct to me. The only small quibble would be that I think we always have to be careful with the word "random" not to imply that anything is possible. I don't think "anything is possible" is Epicurean, and would cite the AA Long article "Chance and Natural Law in Epicureanism"

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## **Post by “Daniel” of April 2, 2019 at 12:59 PM**

### CHRISTIANITY VERSUS EPICUREANISM (II)

In view of the latest debate on the compatibility of Epicureanism with other worldviews and philosophies of life, I would like to call attention to the following quotation:

*„In focusing on Christianity for historical reasons, we should not forget the fundamental cosmological and moral agreement between Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Since all three share a common foundation in the Old Testament, all three will be in basic opposition to Epicurean materialism (and hence moral Darwinism). Consequently, much of what is said about Christianity in its opposition to Epicureanism could be said of Judaism and Islam as well...“*

It's not only you who chooses your enemy, it's more often your enemy who chooses you.

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## Post by “Daniel” of April 2, 2019 at 1:06 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

I think we always have to be careful with the word "random" not to imply that anything is possible. I don't think "anything is possible" is Epicurean, and would cite the AA Long article "Chance and Natural Law in Epicureanism"

These are Wiker's opinions, of course. I am quoting from his book. His reading of Epicurus and Lucretius is usually incomplete and unsympathetic. How much is willful ignorance and how much malice, I'm still undecided.

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## Post by “Cassius” of April 2, 2019 at 1:10 PM

In that context, I forgot the paragraph that Vincent Cook has on his site Epicurus.net about "[Epicurus and The Judeans](#)" (for some reason I can't reach the site this morning, so this is the archive.org link) -

### **Epicureanism and the Judeans**

In the Talmudic *Mishnah*, one of the authoritative documents of Rabbinical Judaism, there is a remarkable statement in the tractate Sanhedrin that defines the Jewish religion in relation to Epicureanism:

“All Israel has a share in the world to come, as Isaiah said: And all of your people who are righteous will merit eternity and inherit the land. And these are the people who do not merit the world to come: The ones who say that there is no resurrection of the dead, and those who deny the Torah is from the heavens, and Epicureans (‘Apikorsim’).”

Modern Jews use “apikoros” as a generic term for an unbeliever, but the authors of the Talmud were clearly singling out followers of Epicurus. In effect, this statement is saying that all of Israel will enjoy eternal life except those who get corrupted by Epicurus or certain characteristic Epicurean beliefs (namely, Epicurean denials of an after-life and of divine providence). This peculiar hostility towards Epicureanism is all the more remarkable for the fact that this particular statement was later taken to be the basis for speculation about the meaning of Jewishness among Rabbis of the Middle Ages, the most famous of whom, **Moses Maimonides**,

explicitly continued the Jewish tradition of denouncing Epicureanism late in the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

[Antiochus IV] or type unknown

## Antiochus IV

The origins of this anti-Epicurean element of Jewish thought can be traced to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., when the Seleucid monarch **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** embarked on a military campaign against Egypt in an attempt to conquer his Ptolemaic rival. Judea had the misfortune to be located between the Seleucid heartland of Syria and Ptolemaic Egypt, and the Judeans were divided into pro-Seleucid and pro-Ptolemaic factions. At this time, the hereditary Zadokite priesthood had been deeply influenced by Greek culture, adopting doctrines that tended to discount the conservative oral tradition and deny some of the more superstitious beliefs then current, notably the belief in bodily resurrection. At the time of Antiochus's campaign, the Zadokite high priest was a pro-Ptolemaic partisan.

Antiochus, anxious to secure Judea in connection with his Egyptian expedition and to create a more culturally-unified empire, had the Zadokite high priest removed and founded a Greek-style Gymnasium in Jerusalem. Antiochus was sympathetic to Epicureanism (albeit not acting in accord with Epicurus's injunctions to avoid politics), so his attempt at a forced hellenization of Judea was closely linked to Epicureanism in the minds of the Judean patriots. Another factor was that Epicureans were prominent in the hellenized cities of Galilee, creating a rivalry between Epicureanism and the traditional religion among the northern Judeans. Antiochus's provocations brought about a strong nationalistic reaction, which exploded into violence when a rumor of Antiochus's death reached Judea. While the rumor was false, nonetheless the Hasmonean leader **Judas Maccabeus** was ultimately successful in his revolt against the Seleucids.

After the Hasmoneans consolidated their power, a rather delicate situation developed with respect to the priesthood. The hereditary successors to the priesthood had had their legitimacy fatally undermined by their hellenizing tendencies and their close association with the foreign Ptolemaic monarchy. The party of the "separatists" (the Pharisees), prevented the Zadokite legitimists (the Sadducees) from reassuming control of the temple in Jerusalem, while some of the Sadducees set up a rival temple in the Egyptian city of Leontopolis.

To further complicate matters, Judea later became a client state of Rome, and the Romans installed their own Jewish rulers and Sadducee priests. Not only were they opposed by the Pharisees, other anti-foreign religious factions arose during the late Hasmonean period (early 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.) to challenge the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Samaritans (a regional offshoot of Judaism whose followers had established their own center of worship on Mount Gezzarim), their adherents questioning the necessity for temple ritual and priestly authority altogether. One of these dissident groups called themselves the "keepers" (Nazirim) of divine wisdom. These Nazirim, or Nazarenes, taught that righteousness towards others along with

frequent rituals of baptism and anointment and a ritual eucharist for the dead was sufficient to place oneself in accord with God without the traditional temple ceremonies. After the Roman conquest of Judea, the Nazarene cults became one of the focal points of resistance to Roman and Herodian rule, as both the Pharisees and Sadducees were co-opted by the Herodian monarchy that had been installed by the Romans.

[Spoils from the Jerusalem Temple]

Spoils from the Jerusalem Temple

The historical significance of these intricacies of ancient Judean politics is that the Pharisees are the direct ancestors of modern Rabbinical Judaism, while the Nazarene movement spawned two religions that have survived to modern times, the Mandaean and the Christian. The founding of these two Nazarene religions was attributed to **John the Baptist** and **Jesus**, respectively.

The Talmud is derived from the Pharisaic oral tradition, so the Talmud passage quoted above can be explained as a Pharisaic attack on the Sadducees by comparing some of the distinctive Sadducee beliefs to those of the hated Seleucid defiler of the Temple. It seems that the Sadducees could never quite live down the charge of having sold out to the Seleucids and the Romans, as they disappeared shortly after the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem Temple in 70 A.D. and the genealogical records for proving their Zadokite ancestry (the last remaining basis for Sadducee legitimacy) along with it. Today, the memory of the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus survives in the Jewish celebration of *Hanukkah*, and the legacy of the factional conflicts of the Hasmonean period lives on in the separate religions of the Jews, Mandaeans, and Christians and in the Talmudic denunciation of Epicureanism.

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## Post by “Daniel” of April 2, 2019 at 1:15 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

In that context, I forgot the paragraph that Vincent Cook has on his site Epicurus.net about "Epicurus and The Judeans" (for some reason I can't reach the site this morning, so this is the archive.org link) -

Excellent!

By the way, I remember an article by the late Christopher Hitchens on Hanukkah. It was related to the same story and sympathetic to Epicurus. Have you read it?

## Post by “Cassius” of April 2, 2019 at 2:01 PM

No I don't recall seeing that -- if you come across it please post - I will google too.

Simple to find - I will see if there is a better version - <http://www.thinkatheist.com/group/atheists...-by-christopher>

Jewish orthodoxy possesses the interesting feature of naming and combating the idea of the apikoros or “Epicurean”—the intellectual renegade who prefers Athens to Jerusalem and the schools of philosophy to the grim old routines of the Torah. About a century and a half before the alleged birth of the supposed Jesus of Nazareth (another event that receives semiofficial recognition at this time of the year), the Greek or Epicurean style had begun to gain immense ground among the Jews of Syria and Palestine. The Seleucid Empire, an inheritance of Alexander the Great—Alexander still being a popular name among Jews—had weaned many people away from the sacrifices, the circumcisions, the belief in a special relationship with God, and the other reactionary manifestations of an ancient and cruel faith. I quote Rabbi

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## Post by “Elli” of April 2, 2019 at 5:07 PM

The eminent heads of Italy were discussing around the welcoming table of Medici for the purpose to reconcile Plato and Jesus. They were dreaming of a religion that unites Christian morality and Greek Philokalia. For all this world, after Alexandrian era, Epicurus was a scandal, such a scandal was for being someone reasonable and to believe in the things that catches with his hands and the right judgments of his conclusions. Epicurus contemporaries were buried him already under calumny, slander and filthy perversions. His extensive work was neglected, lost and we owe in luck the few precious pieces that survived. Hidden for centuries like a spark in ashes were helpful as tinder when the crew of time arrived. The research and understanding have renovated his luminous figure, his genuine Greek figure, and inspired by his luminous physiognomy we restore the antiquity as it was in reality. (Excerpt from the book by the Professor of Philosophy Charalambos Theodoridis entitled "Epicurus - The True Face of the Ancient World")

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## Post by "Elli" of April 2, 2019 at 5:09 PM

"These are the kinds of results we would get from our statistical survey of the population of Greece as regards the disappearance of the Hellenic element and the influence of the Jewish culture. Superficially, on the documents and in name only are we Greeks. But underneath, in our very essence and our animate matter, we are Jews. And we should not be deceived by the simplistic arguments promoted by various priests and preachers that, supposedly, Christianity is one thing, Judaism another. Or that Orthodoxy is one thing, Roman-Catholicism another. Such claims are but fraudulent sophistries and overstretched naiveté. All those that insist upon such foolishness, are like those who claim that whores are different from hookers. But they both work in brothels. That a long distance runner is different from a discus thrower. But they are both athletes. That there are differences between a lymphoma, leukaemia and laryngeal cancer. But they are all cancers of some sort. Malignant blemishes that ended the lives of Cavafy and Freud. We modern Greeks resemble our ancient ancestors only in form. But the mass, this m the physicists talk about, is utterly Jewish. And the space, the spatium or this s the physicists talk about, within which the de-Hellenisation of the Greeks took place, is Christian Byzantium. And the time, the tempus or the t the physicists talk about, within whose duration the process of Jew-ification of the Greeks took place, stretches from the time of Emperor Theodosius until this very day.

Theodosius destroyed temples, ravaged ancient statues, closed down stadiums, theatres, Greek schools. All the sources that were the lifestream of the Hellenic way of life. This is why he is remembered as "the Great". Which is the way his predecessor, Constantine, is also remembered. The Caesar who murdered his own wife and son. And they were first called "Great" by those who also called "Great" the Emperors Athanasius, Basil and all their ilk. Destroyers, forgers, vandals of the Hellenic idea. But there is another voice, persistently whispering from the shadows, that all the brutalities the Christians inflicted upon the Greeks mean nothing in the end for those that did not become Jewish-Greeks but remained Hellenic-Greeks. It rises from a distant place and is only heard by a few:

Just because we tore their statues down,

and cast them from their temples,

does not mean that the gods are dead.

This is Cavafy, dear reader, not some miser. Not some invented god. And the poem is called Ionian. It is not called Cherubicon. The dissolution and extinguishing of the classical Greek by Jewish-minded Christians lasted from the time of Theodosius until the time of Empress Eudoxia. Up to 843AD, with the official restitution of the icons. This holiday in the Orthodox calendar is

celebrated annually since then, at the beginning of Spring! It is a grandiose celebration attended by state officials and foreign dignitaries. Viewed from a positive perspective, it symbolizes the triumph of Christianity. But viewed from its negative perspective, it represents the utter destruction of everything Greek. It is the tombstone of the Hellenic idea. The last stand of the moderate "Greek" against the Asian monstrosity was through Leo III, the Isaurian. He got up one morning and realized that half the population of the empire had taken up the cloth and were having a splendid time. Then, like Jesus at the temple, he began what came to be known as the Iconomachy. That story reached its sad conclusion with the light defeated and darkness triumphant. With the Sunday of Orthodoxy and the appearance of the modern Greek identity. So Greeks only by name and superficially. And Jews to the bone, the blood, the heart, the intestines and the bile. Herein lies the key, the reason and the cause of the national schizophrenia".

An excerpt from the book "Gemma", by Dimitris Liantinis and as translated from greek into english, by Yannis Tsapras.

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## **Post by "Daniel" of April 3, 2019 at 9:51 AM**

### CHRISTIANITY VERSUS EPICUREANISM (III)

"To begin at the beginning...we can see that the Christian God is a creator God. He is not, like the god of Epicurus, a part of nature, nor is nature coeternal with him. He exists as an independent immaterial being. Furthermore, the Christian doctrine of creation ex nihilo (creation out of nothing) strikes directly against Epicurus's doctrine that the universe, atoms and the void are all eternal..."

"...His omnipotence extends from before time to all of time. Therefore, unlike the [Epicurean gods](#), the Christian God is not only a creator but a miracle worker, and examples of miracles abound throughout the Old and New Testament..."

"...Creation is from the top down, so to speak, whereas in Epicurus, it was from the bottom up. That is, God is portrayed in Genesis as an intelligent designer, creating, according to the plan of his intellect and will...For Epicurus and Lucretius, by contrast, the visible form a thing takes is caused by the accidental relations of matter..."

"...In regard to humanity, according to Genesis 1-2 human beings are distinct from other animals. They are the pinnacle of earthly creation, somehow made in God's image, not, as with Lucretius, a happy accident of chance, ultimately no different from other animals. Following upon this, it is clear from reading the entire Bible that human beings have an immortal, immaterial soul; that death, rather than being the natural dissipation of atoms, is an unnatural

punishment; and finally, that the immaterial soul lives on after the death of the body..."

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### **Post by "Cassius" of April 3, 2019 at 10:38 AM**

[Quote from Daniel](#)

a happy accident of chance

Same comment on this as before in my reference to A.A. Long. I think it is a common theme among religious opponents of Epicurus that they like to attribute the fact of life to "chance" rather than to the natural properties of the elements. "Chance" seems to carry a derogatory weight that they like to exploit.

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### **Post by "Daniel" of April 5, 2019 at 3:41 PM**

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS EPICUREANISM (IV)

"...As opposed to Lucretius's belief that we are amoral by nature, the biblical account clearly presents human beings as moral by nature. This is seen not only in regard to the example of sexuality..., but also in the command of God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:16-17), God's anger when he is disobeyed (3:11), and the moral blame assigned to Cain for killing his brother (4:11-13). This sets the pattern for the whole Bible: from the ten commandments (Ex 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21) all the way to the last judgment depicted in Revelation (20:1-15), there is no doubt that some acts are intrinsically evil whether or not they might happen to give us pleasure and pain, and the moral commandment are explicitly tied to God's will, both in regard to creation and redemption..."

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### **Post by "Cassius" of April 5, 2019 at 3:57 PM**

[Quote from Daniel](#)

the command of God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

Even if the heavens were to open and Jesus were to appear to me personally I would never buy that this was a legitimate position for "God" to take.

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## Post by “Daniel” of April 5, 2019 at 4:00 PM

### CHRISTIANITY VERSUS EPICUREANISM (V)

"...death is *everything* to the Christian, for death seals the relationship, for better or worse, of each individual human being to God. Rejection of God and his moral order mean eternal damnation - and the pain involved in neither small nor of short duration, as Epicurus promised all pain would be..."

"...Death, therefore, does not bring extinction, but judgment, the very thing Epicurus and Lucretius both thought to be the worst of disturbances... The Christian God, unlike the [Epicurean gods](#), will both punish and reward..."

"...In the Old Testament, pain, toil and death are ultimately tied to moral disobedience, and becomes an inescapable punishment that all human beings must bear (Gen. 3:16-19). In the New Testament, where everything is turned on its head, or perhaps better, things are turned right side up again, pain, toil and death become the window to eternity - and worse yet, in regard to Epicureanism, the very window opened by God himself in his passion, death and resurrection..."

"...Furthermore, the 'imperfections' in the universe, imperfections that were for Lucretius a certain sign that the universe was made by chance and not divine design, were linked by Christianity to the violation of the moral order of the universe...Again, toil and pain are punishment for the disobedience of the first human beings (Gen. 3:14-24), and plagues, diseases, droughts and the like were, as clearly seen in the account of Moses and Pharaoh (Ex. 3:1-14:31), directly brought on by God as well. Even more opposed to Epicurus, the entire New Testament, from the Gospels to Revelation, is quite adamant in the assertion that demons - immaterial fallen angels - also use various sicknesses to afflict humanity. Finally, and most peculiarly Christian, *nature itself* somehow participates in the fallenness of humanity..."

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## Post by “Cassius” of April 5, 2019 at 4:02 PM

Very interesting quotes.

Got to hand it to this guy that I think he's as wrong as he can be, but he follows ever wrong lead to its logical conclusion!

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## Post by “Elli” of April 6, 2019 at 6:41 AM

Death is not only an issue of Christians et.al, it is an issue of Greeks too. However, the Greeks in the basis of their culture, art, and philosophy they faced and this issue with dignity and bravery, and in accordance with the natural phenomena. Always, in greek tragedies and myths, there is a redemption and a victory for the human against to what provokes to him pain, fear, and confusion. And of course this is evidenced by Epicurean philosophy too.

Here is an excerpt from the book "Gemma" by Dimitris Liantinis that is explained those myths in the bible, and on how the natural became unnatural.

"The fourth chapter of Genesis is the story of Death. It is the tragedy of Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus. It is the fratricide of Cain and Abel. It is the fratricide of Polyneikes and Eteokles. Man was warned that if he tasted the fruit of knowledge, he would know death : “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”- Genesis 2, 17 . And the threat, that was erstwhile issued by god to the splendidly naked creatures, soon materialized. They ate on Friday and died on Saturday. Since the subject of the third chapter of Genesis was knowledge, by necessity the subject of the fourth would be death. The two brothers, agricultural farmers, offer the first produce of their toils to mother nature as a grateful sacrifice. Abel presents a white lamb while Cain brings some fruits of the soil. Nature turns an attentive ear and listens to Abel's song but silently disregards Cain's plight. Abel's flock grows larger while Cain's fields grow parched. The hapless brother grows jealous of the prosperous one. “Let's go out to the field”, he tells him. While there, he lifts a large rock and brings it down forcefully on his brother's head. The head cracks in two. Blood and brains spill to the ground. The body collapses like a tree and falls flat in a single movement. Abel's eyesight is quickly fading. He turns to address his brother for the last time: - “Why did you slay me brother? I will never see the birds and the sun again. Never again will a maiden pour water over my hands at the spring. My child and my sheep will never know my caring touch again. Never again! You hear me? Nevermore!”

The writer of Genesis then says that lightning struck Cain's forehead and forever marked him as a murderer. But it was not lightning. It was that Nevermore! It was the last words uttered by Abel that became a wrinkle of death and marked his brother's brow. It is the same wrinkle we all carry on our brow from Cain's time and forever after. It is the knowledge of death. Among all things that live, animals, birds, plants, reptiles, stars, the knowledge of death is unique to humans. It is the heavy ransom with which we bought our intelligent consciousness. Our cognitive understanding.

Millions of humans had perished before Abel but did not know that they were dying. Just like the fish, birds, plants, reptiles, stars, die without such knowledge. They did not know that they were dying because they lived in the paradise of ignorance of the animal. Death arrived on this world with Cain. And the knowledge of death is a most costly comprehension. The billowing cloud brings rain to the thirsty plains and snow to the mountaintops. The cloud of Cain summoned and unleashed the lightning of terror in human existence. Its unworldly radiance that engulfed the land of our story became a vast cloak of blood. I mean that this Nevermore! It was the last words uttered by a dying Abel, was to become for humans the locus of the most savage terror concerning their dialectical relationship with death. The physical knowledge that by dying, man is lost forever, never to live again, sowed in his existence a horrible fear.

Forever! and Nevermore! Two phrases whose volume displacement has an absolute value. Their predetermined destiny is to be used by man solely for the definitive fact of death. Man could not bear this horrible fear in the face of death. He could not find the presence of mind to conquer it. To admit it and acknowledge it. To submit gracefully and with dignity to this relentless rightful force of nature. He wavered. And he wavered exactly at this crucial moment. So, the trophy was seized by death. Man started to flee and death took up the chase. And the poor sod is still running to escape. Distraught, blind and light-footed. He seeks, having lost his way, a safe place to hide. The only safety he finds is in caves and earthly habitations. These are muddy holes and rocky ravines, avalanches and landslides that bring him tumbling down to the unkempt basements of his sentiments and feverish imagination. These are lands hidden away in the darkness of existence, thousands of miles deep and far from the blazing troposphere of our logic. So that we can no longer hear Abel's lightning. The deafening sound of that Nevermore!

To conceal and escape from the horrible terror of death, **man invented the gods and religions. And life after death.** This first and foremost. Belief in the afterlife is the suspension system, the backbone of all religions. Find me a single religion whose founder did not construct its edifice upon the foundation stone of belief in the afterlife and I will gladly demonstrate how this religion doesn't have a single follower, not even its own founder. I am not talking about Buddha here because nirvana is abandonment, not virtuous pride.

Through gods and religions, all the dirty laundry of human history came into being and found their way into the light. Clergies, synagogues and catechism. Opium for the masses, dementia and fanaticism. Congealing theological hatred, odium theologicum. And alongside the unsightly

shape and rotting flesh of all related offices. **Like a malignant carcinoma and a parasite.** The alleged holy visions, demonic possessions and exorcisms. And at its highest echelons you'll find the institutes of ignorance and the brilliant academies of darkness. The theological colleges and the holy Synod. It was through gods and religions that all the dirty laundry of human history found their way into the light.

From Aeschylus and “ἐλευθεροῦτε θεῶν τε πατρῶων ἔδη”[\*] to the crosses of the Crusaders, to Hitler's Swastika and the recent Jihads against the American “infidels” during the Gulf Wars. In this mutation of human nature, the mark of Cain is much worse than the mark of Onan. Because here the derailing of the natural to the unnatural has to do with a perversion of the mind, of the spirit, and of core values. It is the counterfeiting of the entire history of civilization. Both are evils, but the venom of the viper is much more dangerous than the sting of a bee! For when all is said and done, Onan's brand set man off on a hunt for endurance and pleasure. But with Cain's mark man became the prey of fear and his own cowardice. With Onan, man casts himself off the rock while singing. With Cain, he sinks wailing in the mire". (Dimitris Liantinis “Gemma”)

[\*] Paean as sung by the Greeks in the battle of Salamina (Aeschylus Persians 402-5).

Oh sons of the greeks,

Free your fatherland,

free your children, your wives, the temples of your fathers' gods,

and the tombs of your ancestors,

Now the struggle is for all the things.

The essence of Aeschylus's Paean lies in protecting family, and cult and in keeping the country, the land of the fathers, free by taking up arms in defense, and not in a war of ambition. The classical battle cry makes the defense of Greek territory a legitimate ground for “just war”, which has been key to the understanding of patriotism to the present day. The just defenders of hearth and home, of the ancestral soil that had produced and raised them, deserved victory. Such a motivation in its modern version aided in the territorial reconfiguration of Greece. Because the Greek military action was a reaction to defend Greek territory, Aeschylus's lines also conveyed that war could have been avoided, if only the enemy had chosen to do so. Thus, the celebrated passage held the seeds to develop a public discourse on patriotic revenge, but also one on war and peace.

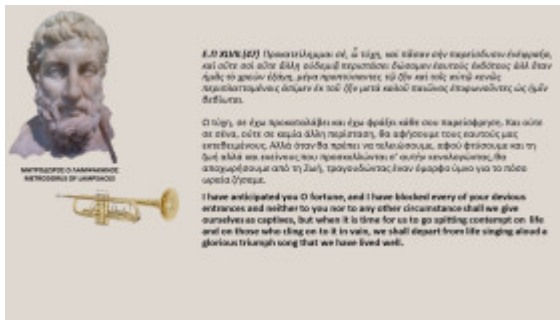
“Aeschylus describes the paean as a “holy cry uttered in a loud voice, a shout offered in sacrifice, emboldening to friends, and dissolving fear of the foe”. When an army marched into the battle of a navy left the harbor to wage war at sea, the men sang the paean. It was a combination of prayer, cheer, and rebel yell ...Aeschylus is blunt about the paean's terrifying

effect on the Persian audience aboard ship.

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## Post by “Elli” of April 6, 2019 at 7:36 AM

Here is the Paean of the Epicureans, as said by Metrodorus :



This Saying is attributed to Metrodorus. An Epicurean leaves as little as possible to chance, to fortune, as is also discussed in Principal Doctrine 16. One does so neither by dreading, nor by worshipping fortune (as do the many), but by "anticipating" it. In a finely wrought metaphor, the author depicts such an anticipation as a barricade of sorts, the wise person having blocked every possible path of egress, keeping chance outside of his/her life. Continuing with the militant metaphor, such a person is determined not to surrender to chance under any circumstances.

An Epicurean, however, knows that before "that which is necessary" (i.e. death), we all "live in an unfortified city", as Metrodorus himself wrote in epicurean saying 31. One ought not to harbor delusions of immortality, thinking that all those fortifications against fortune will also serve in preventing death itself. Thus, when what is necessary as a law of nature comes along, one ought to remain in good cheer and high spirits. "Boldly spitting upon life" and those who cling on to in with some vain hopes of immortality (he is succumbing to this or that superstition), a true Epicurean departs from life singing a joyful paean to life, shouting out for all to hear that, yes, this life has been lived well.

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## Post by “Daniel” of April 7, 2019 at 11:23 AM

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS EPICUREANISM (VI)

"...Since there is such deep irreconcilable disagreement between Christianity and Epicureanism on the cosmological and larger moral level - both in regard to their respective natural foundations and in regard to Christianity's supernatural elements and goal - there will also be radical disagreement between the two on the particularities of morality, even when there appears to be agreement on the surface..."

"...we must also realize that Christians were not the only ones arguing from an intelligent design position. Much of what is said in this chapter of Christianity, insofar as it is based on the natural law, could be said of Stoicism and Aristotelianism as well, but historically Stoicism and Aristotelianism were influential in the long run because they supported the approach of Christianity, and therefore, Christianity took up their arguments and carried them forward..."

"...As a consequence, no sexual act is intrinsically evil, for as Epicurus himself said, "every pleasure is a good thing...Moral restrictions arise in Epicureanism from two sources, our bodily constitution and the peculiar moral boundaries of the society in which we happen to find ourselves...for Epicureanism, a particular relationship of sexuality to marriage can only be considered a social convention which may be useful but is not essentially good..."

"...Thus, when Jesus was asked about divorce, he did not question whether divorce might be useful, or allow for greater pleasure, or reduce the amount of pain; rather, he rejected divorce as contrary to the natural, created order..."

"...Therefore, in contrast to Epicurean relativism, permanent monogamy is the natural moral standard by which all other sexual practices and marriage customs one happens to find, rather than being explained in terms of the accidents of place and time, are understood to be caused by moral defect, a falling away from the intended natural goal...masturbation, fornication (sex outside marriage), adultery, homosexuality, pederasty and bestiality are all condemned as violations of the natural order..."

"...in the current debate about abortion, everything ultimately depends on whether one thinks that human beings do or do not have an immortal soul, that is, on whether one is adopting the argument of the Christian or the Epicurean...If the Epicurean is right about nature, then the Christian is a fool, and a pernicious, meddling one at that, for treating a mass of cells no bigger than a pencil point as a divinely informed sacred life. But if the Christian is right about nature, then the Epicurean is promoting and engaging in mass murder on a scale dwarfing the wickedness of all other combined..."

"...It is also important to notice that Christianity stands almost alone in its condemnation of suicide...the centrality of Christ's passion made the bearing of severe suffering the very model of redemption. Christians were commanded to take up the cross and, as Christ did, bear their suffering to the bitter end, for bearing such suffering in imitation of Christ was taken to be the path to holiness and eternal life...That ancient, great abyss between the Epicurean's and the Christian's moral reasoning about suicide is the very abyss that has opened up again in the contemporary debates about euthanasia and the right to die; and again, the two sides share

nothing in common..."

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### **Post by "Cassius" of April 7, 2019 at 12:01 PM**

Excellent points of contrast Daniel! All of these have many uses, especially in distinguishing Epicurus from Stoicism and Aristotelianism -

#### [Quote from Daniel](#)

"...we must also realize that Christians were not the only ones arguing from an intelligent design position. Much of what is said in this chapter of Christianity, insofar as it is based on the natural law, could be said of Stoicism and Aristotelianism as well, but historically Stoicism and Aristotelianism were influential in the long run because they supported the approach of Christianity, and therefore, Christianity took up their arguments and carried them forward..."

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### **Post by "Godfrey" of April 7, 2019 at 4:31 PM**

On the last point regarding the condemnation of suicide, it seems like he's confusing the Epicureans with the Stoics.

Epicurus' [VS 38](#) *He is a little man in all respects who has many good reasons for quitting life.*

The Isonomia book that [Rivelle](#) linked to in the "Epicurus, Ionia and India" thread discusses the Athenians v the Ionians in terms of idealism v materialism. Apparently the intelligent design v natural selection debate has been around since at least 500 BC! I found the parts of the book dealing with philosophy to be a very interesting read.

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### **Post by "Rivelle" of April 8, 2019 at 1:49 AM**

#### [Quote from elli](#)

*the book by the Professor of Philosophy Charalambos Theodoridis entitled "Epicurus - The True Face of the Ancient World")*

Elli, can you please provide a link with further information about Theodoridis's book? And "Gemma" by Dimitris Liantinis?

Conducting a google search in English has thus far yielded nothing re. Theodoridis.

For Liantinis, there is more material in English. Do you have any advice regarding where to start reading etc. ?

His lecture here

<http://www.liantinis.org/english/>

contains much that is intriguing but also much that is rather enigmatic, and thus possibly misunderstood, for readers/listeners who do not speak Modern Greek.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of April 8, 2019 at 6:40 AM**

FWIW I purchased Gemma here at Amazon and found it to be very good - <https://www.amazon.com/Gemma-Dimitris...sr=8-1-fkmrnull>

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### **Post by "Daniel" of April 9, 2019 at 6:02 AM**

#### THE FALL AND RISE OF EPICUREANISM

"...As the Roman Republic crumbled from internal decay, and the two Caesars, Julius and then Augustus, substituted imperial for republican rule, the new empire championed the philosophy of the Stoics, which seemed to answer far better to the required virtues of duty and self-sacrifice for the common good than did the apolitical and pleasure-based morality of Epicureanism...In addition, while Stoicism argued that the natural order was divinely ordained and the gods watched over human affairs, Epicureanism denied any relation of the gods either

to nature or human affairs – and moreover had the malodorous reputation of being either openly or secretly atheistic...”

“...But during the first four centuries of Christianity, Epicureanism was a living rival, strong enough and pervasive enough to be an object of worry, and hence an object of scorn, both in regard to its focus on pleasure and the denial of the soul’s immortality, and its alleged atheism...”

“...The thirteenth-century incorporation of Aristotle as the pagan philosopher most compatible with Christianity deserves our special attention...it was Aristotle’s account of nature, as taken up by Christianity, that formed the intellectual foundation of scholasticism; as a result scholasticism was the reigning intellectual approach going into the Renaissance...much of the success in reintroducing Epicurean materialism on friendly terms in the West depended on a general discontent with the excessive dry formalism into which scholasticism had unfortunately fallen by the Renaissance...Christians, at least some of them, were therefore ready to use one pagan philosophy (Epicureanism) to uproot another (Aristotelianism)...”

“...because of some who were enamoured with Aristotle and neglected or downplayed Scripture as a source of truth, other Christians (the so-called radical Augustinians) came to see Aristotle’s thought as a kind of spiritual contamination and tried to destroy its influence. The theology they used to combat Aristotelianism, called nominalism, inadvertently paved the way for Epicureanism...”

“...In the spring of 1417 Epicureanism was awakened from its deep slumber. Poggio Bracciolini, infected with the characteristic Renaissance desire to...” *[Here, Wiker summarises the rediscovery of De Rerum Natura. The story is told in disparaging terms, of course, just the opposite of “The Swerve”. There’s a moment in which he even hints that the destruction or loss of Lucretius’s book would have saved us lots of trouble. ]*

“...The works of Epicurus, along with those of his poetic spokesman, became once again available...the publishing history of both attest to the spread of interest in Epicureanism all over Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the firm reestablishing of Epicurean materialism by the seventeenth century...”

“...First, there was the not-such-a-bad-guy approach of simple restoration without advocacy...Second, there was the honey-on-the-rim-of-bitter-poison approach of introducing Epicureanism through an appreciation of Lucretius the poet...A third way attempted to subordinate the materialism of Epicureanism to Christianity, creating a Christianized hybrid of two utterly irreconcilable views of the universe...”

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**Post by “Daniel” of April 9, 2019 at 6:27 AM**

## NEWTONIANISM. THE NEW FACE OF EPICUREAN MATERIALISM

“...As we go from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, the atomism of Epicurus and Lucretius moved from being an alien smuggled into Christianized culture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to being the only tenable theoretical view of natural philosophy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The time period may be conveniently marked by the contiguous lives of Galileo Galilei (1554-1642) and Isaac Newton (1642-1727)...”

“...chief among the various figures who contributed to the victory of materialist atomism in science...Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) and Robert Boyle (1627-1691). These three are extraordinarily interesting because they combined atomism with fervent Christianity. The link that allowed this new combination was a common hatred of Aristotelianism...”

“...Bruno was the martyr for the cause...Gassendi was engaged in ongoing conversations with the most famous philosophers and scientists of the day – Kepler, Galileo, Mersenne and Thomas Hobbes – and his books enjoyed a wide and enthusiastic readership. Finally, Boyle was the great advocate of taking atomism from the theoretical realm of the physicists to the very practical realm of the chemists...”

“...If we may provide the briefest statement that characterizes the Galilean-Newtonian revolution, we might call it the vindication of atomism through the victory of mathematics...With the complete theoretical victory of Epicurean materialism, all the essential elements of Epicurus’s system – the eternal and indestructible atoms, the infinite universe with the unlimited number of worlds, the banishment of the creator God, the rejection of miracles, the displacement of design in nature by chance and material necessity, and the elimination of the immaterial soul – fell into place...”

“...For those living in the two centuries between Newton’s Principia and the dawn of the twentieth century, the world was as Newton had described it, and that world was almost exactly as Epicurus had planned it. To understand that moral Epicureanism followed necessarily upon the adoption of theoretical Epicureanism, and that moral Darwinism is the culmination of moral Epicureanism, is to understand the modern world...”

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**Post by “Daniel” of May 1, 2019 at 10:23 AM**

## THE MORAL REVOLUTION OF MATERIALISM

„...There are three major points of transformation in the modern reembrace of moral Epicureanism...“

„...First, Epicureanism became Machiavellian in strategy because it arose at a time when Christianity was powerful and able to persecute its detractors...Obviously, the best place to understand this Macchiavellianism is its source, Machiavelli himself...“

„...Second, modern Epicurean materialism shifted the original asceticism and embraced hedonism instead...May we not push the material limits boundaries, so that we, and not chance, determine the limits of pleasure? And so, rather than turn our powers towards ourselves in an effort to control our desires, as Epicurus had counseled, modern Epicureanism bids us to turn our powers against nature itself in an effort to control it, and remake it according to our desires...Our main focus will be on Francis Bacon...“

„...Third, Epicurean materialism became political rather than remaining apolitical, as it had been originally. This move followed upon the second transformation, the mastering of nature and the consequent releasing of desire from its natural limits...modern natural rights,an invention designed to replace natural law, a vestige of the old view of cosmology that Galilean-Newtonian atomism was in the process of displacing during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries...Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau...“

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## **Post by “Daniel” of May 1, 2019 at 10:39 AM**

### THE TAMING OF CHRISTIANITY, OR SCRIPTURE DECLAWED

„...The materialist revolution of the nineteenth century could not have taken place without undermining the authority of Scripture, a process that began in the seventeenth century, spread in the eighteenth and became a kind of scholarly discipline in the nineteenth...“

„...Hobbes gave us the first Epicurean-friendly interpretation of the Bible, stripped of all miracles and spirits, and focused on this-worldly happiness and peace. Spinoza not only duplicated Hobbes’s efforts, but bequeathed to modernity the great fiction of Christ the merely moral man, the harmless messiah for the nonscientific masses. Strauss completed the work of both Hobbes and Spinoza, excising all elements of the Bible that did not fit into the Newtonian universe, and providing the model and method that defined modern scriptural scholarship thereafter...“

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## **Post by “Cassius” of May 1, 2019 at 12:55 PM**

This guy is so full of it -- but I appreciate your posting these so we don't have to read the full book!