

# Outline for book "Raising Children in the Epicurean Philosophy"

**Post by "Elayne" of June 2, 2019 at 12:11 PM**

This is my outline so far for a book for parents, combining my professional knowledge about child development ( I am a pediatrician) and behavior with EP. I will likely not write chapters in order but will post as I go and then eventually have a full book done. I am very interested in hearing member stories about how they have applied EP to interactions with their children-- I plan to include stories from my own experience as examples of different points. This outline has some technical jargon in it for conciseness, but I will write in a conversational tone.

I would like your comments on the general proposed organization of information and suggestions for any key topic I may be omitting. Thanks!

I. Basic overview of EP, including physics, the Canon, and ethics-- fairly brief and I will probably write this part last

II. Physics (in which I will include relevant biological research, which is ultimately physics)

A. Material nature of the universe and of biological beings

. B. Brief overview of developmental human behaviors and evolutionary pressures-- genetics, epigenetics, environmental influences, timing of skill development, empathy, temperament, etc-- nature/ nurture. Parent nurture influence is a small part of the total environmental influence on adult behavioral outcomes, but we do have influence.

C. Evidence for prolepses-- humans not "blank slates"

D. Research on decision making/ choice and how humans participate in shaping the environment including culture. Include decision fatigue. The process of choice is not an illusion.

III. How children perceive reality and how to provide effective support as a parent

A. Sensory-motor development, effective ways to stimulate

B. Pain and Pleasure

1. Pain-- intrinsic vs extrinsic, pitfalls of behavioral modification (children are not like lab rats), role of pain as a vital warning system, how children express physical/ emotional pain and the temperament variations

2. Pleasure-- intrinsic pleasure, pitfalls of extrinsic rewards, individual variations, shared pleasure

C. Prolepses -- more details about some specific hereditary human cognitions such as innate recognition of justice

D. Development of abstract reasoning and common childhood errors in interpreting their experiences. Human cognitive heuristics. The use and precautions of reasoning as a tool.

#### IV. Ethics in child raising

A. Setting an example through living a pleasant life yourself, demonstrating honesty, trustworthiness, justice, kindness, friendship, wise judgment/ planning-- "show your work" to child so they understand what you are doing and why

B. Teaching wise judgment and decision making for net pleasure in developmentally appropriate ways

C. Making proxy decisions for a child's net pleasure, until child old enough to do so for themselves-- based on adult knowledge, experience, and observation of your child's individual temperament and preferences. Includes using evidence to make wise healthcare decisions for your child. Importance of maintaining your child's future freedom of choice.

D. Increasing shared pleasure in the family through activities and happy memories, building family relationships over time

E. Teaching children about common pitfalls in competing/ popular philosophies and how to recognize subtle variations-- stoicism, Buddhism, Humanism, various social utilitarianisms-- ists and isms, lol

F. Helping your child learn to evaluate potential friendships and skills to nurture true friendships and to recognize and leave situations where they are being treated badly-- social skills

G. Providing effective feedback to help your child learn from mistakes-- communication with children

H. Transitioning over time to a position of providing wisdom from experience and gradually releasing active decision making to children and teen, in age appropriate ways.

V. Raising children without supernatural beliefs in a supernaturalist society-- challenges and tips. Children's developmentally expected fears. How to discuss death with children.

VI. Summary-- raising children as part of a pleasant life, enjoying your relationship with your grown children, transmission of wisdom from one generation to the next. Since this is aimed at parents it won't have a section on enjoying not having children, although I certainly think this is a wise decision for some people!

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**Post by “Elayne” of June 2, 2019 at 12:13 PM**

(by including abstract reasoning under perception of reality, I will not be including it in the Canon-- I mean that I will review ways in which children interpret sensory data, etc-- and I will give examples of why abstract reasoning is NOT in the Canon and why the senses are

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**Post by “Cassius” of June 2, 2019 at 1:26 PM**

Excellent - I will read and comment in detail asap but looks great!

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**Post by “Godfrey” of June 2, 2019 at 6:16 PM**

Quote

II. Physics (in which I will include relevant biological research, which is ultimately physics)

This is a point that I've been thinking and reading about lately. I'm beginning to understand current biological research as part of the Canon (how we know things), and Physics as dealing perhaps more with non-biological (or non-cognitive?) processes.

I'm coming at this from a design background and with very limited scientific background. To this point I've primarily been reading work by Sarah Williams Goldhagen, an architectural critic interested in neuroscience and embodied cognition. As I approach these fields from an Epicurean viewpoint, it seems that modern biological science is addressing sensations, prolepseis and feelings as an integrated whole and validating and clarifying the Canon similarly to how modern physical science has been validating and clarifying the Physics.

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**Post by “Martin” of June 3, 2019 at 2:28 AM**

[Godfrey](#): The sensations etc. are the objects of biological research. The theories and methods of biology correspond to those of physics.

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### **Post by “Martin” of June 3, 2019 at 3:03 AM**

[Elayne](#) : The outline looks fine to me.

I guess that adolescence is no more part of childhood and therefore outside the scope of your book. During our son's adolescence, things got really painful and it was no more obvious what to do. I would have dearly needed guidance on how to deal with strong disagreements between the spouses and between spouse and son during that period. With one spouse strongly influenced by Confucius (i.e the East Asian predecessor and equivalent of Plato) and the other being (at that time implicitly) Epicurean, the conflict between spouses was impossible to hide from the son and certainly caused confusion and had negative effects. I am almost surprised that he has turned out just fine so far, has already earned his bachelor's degree and seems to be on track for a pleasant life.

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of June 3, 2019 at 3:16 AM**

Martin, if I understand you correctly I should have said "I'm beginning to understand *the objects of current biological research* as part of the Canon..." which is a more correct statement.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of June 3, 2019 at 6:18 AM**

Martin's post reminds me of that fragment which has always been one of the murkiest to me - I think people say that the original text is mutilated -

VS 62. If the anger of parents against their children is justified, it is quite pointless for the children to resist it and to fail to ask forgiveness. If the anger is not justified but is unreasonable, it is folly for an irrational child to appeal to someone deaf to appeals and not to try to turn it aside in other directions by a display of good will.

A book on children will also probably want to address the dispute over whether Laertius should be translated "the wise man will marry...according to circumstances..." or "the wise man will NOT marry.." I strongly think that the first is the correct one, as illustrated in Epicurus' will making provision for the marriage of Metrodorus' daughter, but a reader of Epicurus is going to come up on this issues elsewhere so might be a good idea to address it.

Some of my notes on that are collected here - <https://newepicurean.com/love-marriage-...e-modern-world/>

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### **Post by “Cassius” of June 3, 2019 at 6:45 AM**

I don't see that we have any threads or notes under the VS62 section of the forum - maybe as we locate commentary on that, or come up with it ourselves, we can put some of that there for future reference: [VS 62 -Now it parents are justly angry with their children...](#)

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### **Post by “Hiram” of June 3, 2019 at 12:53 PM**

I'd love to help you promote it.

I can give you my editor's email address if you want to pitch the book proposal to him at Humanist Press.

Also, I advise you add objectivism to this list, as they WILL likely encounter it:

E. Teaching children about common pitfalls in competing/ popular philosophies and how to recognize subtle variations-- stoicism, Buddhism, Humanism, various social utilitarianisms-- ists and isms, lol

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### **Post by “Hiram” of June 3, 2019 at 1:12 PM**

Some additional resources re: moral development in children and adults:

*... I hope you too are well and your mamma, and that you are always obedient to Papa and Matro, as you used to be. Let me tell you that the reason that I and all the rest of us love you is that you are always obedient to them.* - Epicurus, in his Letter to a Boy or Girl

(from the Epicurean fragments at epicurus dot net, my link does not work but not sure if its because of the website or if it's because am at work computer)

Also, I drew a parallel between Epicurean and Confucian ideas regarding the importance of role models / mentors for character development. Confucius argued that when leaders are corrupt or evil, people may obey out of fear, but when they're virtuous they wish to avoid the shame of disappointing them. From the above statement by Epicurus to a child, it seems like Epicurus sought to be a virtuous presence that children are ashamed to disappoint, instead of a feared one.

<http://societyofepicurus.com/reasonings-abo...ucius-analects/>

Synopsis of Epicurus' "On Nature", Book 25: On Moral Development - which mentions neuroplasticity, or the physical changes to our brain through habituation and character development, which is true to a materialist interpretation of soul development.

<http://societyofepicurus.com/synopsis-of-ep...al-development/>

(at the bottom of the essay, this includes a link to

[Moral Responsibility and Moral Development in Epicurus](#), by

Susanne Bobzien)

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## Post by "Hiram" of June 3, 2019 at 1:18 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

VS 62. If the anger of parents against their children is justified, it is quite pointless for the children to resist it and to fail to ask forgiveness. If the anger is not justified but is unreasonable, it is folly for an irrational child to appeal to someone deaf to appeals and not to try to turn it aside in other directions by a display of good will.

Concerning anger, when arming a child with techniques to tackle it, I would advise you read Philodemus' scroll On Anger:

<http://societyofepicurus.com/reasonings-on-philodemus-on-anger/>

(you may request it from your public library)

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### Post by “Cassius” of June 3, 2019 at 3:04 PM

I look forward to at some point getting some of this material in hand. In the meantime, here is something I found recently published about On Anger -

[https://www.academia.edu/1327827/On\\_a\\_c...odemus\\_On\\_Anger](https://www.academia.edu/1327827/On_a_c...odemus_On_Anger)

Here's a caution from that article --

the main .

The treatise as a whole has been characterized as ‘frequently scholastic, baffling, and difficult even to construe’.<sup>5</sup> This characterization seems especially apposite to the treatise’s conclusion, which focuses on the anger experienced by a sage. As another recent commentator writes, ‘[T]he work comes to a rather limp and hurried conclusion. It becomes harder than usual to pin down the references, to say who is saying what about whom. The exposition grows hurried and slapdash, as though the author had lost interest and decided that he had gone on long enough.’<sup>6</sup> This much at

least is clear: in the final five columns of the papyrus, Philodemus offers a series of three arguments regarding the sage’s anger, followed in turn by a separate reply to each. To whom we should credit the original arguments, what conclusions we should draw from the replies, and where Philodemus himself ultimately stands on the matter, however, have all proven points of contention among commentators.<sup>7</sup>

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### Post by “Elayne” of June 4, 2019 at 12:38 PM

Godfrey-- when I include biological research in Physics, of course we are using our sensations (and the instruments which are tools to extend our sensations) to perform the research. Just as we use our sensations to observe the results of a physics experiment. However, physics-- the movements and interactions of particles-- is at the root of biology, since we are material creatures. So what I meant is that in the study of the brain, we are studying events and structures that occur as the result of physical interactions in matter/ energy. And when we talk about the results of biological experiments, rather than the methods used, we are in the realm of physics.

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**Post by “Elayne” of June 4, 2019 at 12:43 PM**

Martin, pediatrics used to be just younger children... but my training-- and I have been in practice for 23 years-- was to care for newborns through adolescence. There is some debate on the age to end pediatric care-- most offices I know turn them over to the family docs at 18, but some at 21. I am comfortable doing their medical care, including family relationships and basic psychiatric care, through age 21.

So my book will definitely include teens! I will think about how to include a scenario such as you describe. I haven't run into that exact one, but it is very common for parents to have differing perspectives on a wide variety of issues, and that would be a good aspect to cover. It might come under a broad heading of teaching children to cope with conflict, by example.

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**Post by “Elayne” of June 4, 2019 at 12:52 PM**

Hiram, thank you for those ideas! I do need to include objectivism. I tend to forget it, because I don't see it all that much where I live, but I know it is a popular thing. Because of my schedule, it might take quite a while for me to finish... so I think I should get some sections at least in a draft before contacting a publisher. But when the time comes, that would be great!

The concept of parental leadership out of respect, not fear, is one of the major things I will cover-- that is what I have taught my whole career! I agree completely. When I was on faculty at UAB, I taught the med students their discipline lecture. I always stressed that discipline comes from the Latin word for teaching/ learning-- not for whacking them on the butt. The AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) calls that type of leadership "authoritative" parenting, as opposed to authoritarian parenting. There was a time when this was popular-- Dr. Ginot, for example, and Dr. Thomas Gordon-- and lately the pendulum has swung in what to me is a micromanaging, behavioral modification direction with lots of rewards and punishments that tend to backfire and are largely ineffective.

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**Post by “Elayne” of June 4, 2019 at 12:58 PM**

Cassius, I will likely need your help when I get to the point of including some of the historical documents/ translations-- I think my main focus will be on how the basic structure of the philosophy applies to raising children, but it will be stronger if I include specific historical references. Most likely I will write initially from my pediatric knowledge/ experience, which agrees with EP in full-- and then add in the history as part of background. So when I post chapters, I will be glad to revise them to incorporate historical material.

For anyone who is substantially involved in the book, I will certainly want to list them as co-authors.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of June 4, 2019 at 1:01 PM**

I don't know how to evaluate what makes sense on co-authorship but I will do what I can and I bet others will too. I think that's one of the best uses of a forum like this, as an aid in proofing and other research.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of June 4, 2019 at 1:13 PM**

I suspect Elli will post this somewhere we can find it but it probably belongs in this thread too:

Ecce Teacher, an excerpt from the book "TA HELLINIKA", by Dimitris Liantinis.

[...The first commandment is to build the soul of the child on the stone of life. The second is to clean from the inside the rust of superstition.

Without knowing and without to understand it, from the birth of the child, we put snakes around the child with superstitions and magical cataplasms. And with these poisons, we choke his soul. As the weeds choke the wheat.

Superstitions are like Lerneia Hydra. And Leviathan who swallows seas. We load on the back of the new man our sick imagination, the falsehoods, the ignorance, our moral fossilization, the fearful and performances around the sunken atavism of the ancestors. And we force the child to lift on the shoulder this flea market of uselessness and oxidation as that ancient Titan lifted the sky in his shoulders.

We strive to subtract the Nature inside the child, and we exchange it with our sick mind.

And look the priests with censers in the corners of cemeteries. As they're grabbing the money from the suffering persons. Like the snake, they are, looking for how to magnetize the victim. And when it happens to watch them how they brawl in vulgarity in front of the customer. Smashing. Of course, one may comprehend and for their rabid reaction while we ask the establishment in Greece of the crematorium and the optional cremation. As it happens in seasoned countries.

And look the astrologers with horoscopes and zodiacs in newspapers, the magazines, and television. You see some thick ladies who when they start talking to you about the Ear of Virgo and the influences of Capricorn with the horns in your love, they clam up Penzias and Wilson ...

And look the hymn for the good soul and good end of one's life. To become righteous and be good for the others. The sunset you go to the little window, and read the Holy Bible and fairy tales of Halima, as the saying to that daughter of the "Woman of Zante": You n 'sanctify, and let do not care that others are wolves ready to eat you. And above all, this: You keep your eyes four, for the Heaven and its Kingdom.

Red as poppies and yellow as bile is the drug's landscape of falsity and superstition. The strategy to destroy the natural landscape of the child with the superstition is intentional, is directed, and is felony trillion and quadrillion to death and inhuman....]

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### **Post by “bradley.whitley” of June 6, 2019 at 1:35 PM**

Elayne,

I would be up for interview. I am raising my sons as Epicureans. Quite nice.

Anyway, I look forward to your writings.

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### **Post by “Hiram” of June 6, 2019 at 1:52 PM**

Speaking of education--I'm also curious to know how [Elayne](#) and others would interpret Vatican Saying 76

76. As you grow old you are such as I urge you to be, and you have recognized the difference between studying philosophy for yourself and studying it for Greece. I rejoice with you.

<http://epicurus.net/en/vatican.html>

I read an anti-polis / anti-state, somewhat anarchic message into this, that must have repercussions in a philosophy education. I've written before about Epicurean 'cosmopolitanism' (in the blog "[community versus polis](#)") as an expression of a certain anarchic undercurrent that is more indifferent than hostile to the polis / state. But this has never been commented on or expanded upon by others.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of June 6, 2019 at 3:21 PM**

@Brad - Whether Elayne interviews you or not, it would be interesting to have you post some of your own thoughts on how to do it, either in this thread or in another one.

If you have a series of comments, or simply so lengthy that it would take this thread off topic, start a thread in THIS forum [Childhood Education](#)

If it doesn't let you start a thread there please let me know - I think you can.

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### **Post by “Joshua” of June 6, 2019 at 10:58 PM**

#### Quote

I read an anti-polis / anti-state, somewhat anarchic message into this, that must have repercussions in a philosophy education.

Hiram offers an interesting and subtle bit of textual criticism here, and I think it's worth exploring.

It's a famously difficult maxim for several reasons. It is removed from its context; it doesn't adequately define or explore either of the two options presented; and, most curiously, it doesn't even make it obvious which of the two is preferable! This last challenge invites the reader to infer from it almost anything they like. I could, for example, infer and defend any of the

following if I considered only this text in isolation:

1.) The student will know the difference between studying philosophy for herself and studying philosophy for all of Greece, and will choose to study for herself.

Or, 2.) The student will know the difference between studying philosophy for herself and studying philosophy for all of Greece, and will choose to study for all of Greece.

Or, 3.) The student will know the difference between studying philosophy for herself and studying philosophy for all of Greece, but won't decide between them. Perhaps employing a bit of game theory, she'll choose to study philosophy for herself *for* all of Greece!

When I first encountered it, it didn't even occur to me that there were multiple possible interpretations. "Well," I thought, "of course the Epicurean will study philosophy for herself. The point of philosophy is to cure the dis-ease of the soul." And despite the obvious example of Epicurus himself (who in a sense did study philosophy for Greece--see Lucretius' paeon in Book 1), I still favor this reading; itself an indirect indictment of the nauseating proto-totalitarianism of the Platonic philosopher-king.

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### **Post by "Elayne" of June 9, 2019 at 12:53 PM**

VS 76 sounds like one of those sayings where the specific context matters, so I would just be guessing. When I read DeWitt, I realized how important the contexts were. For myself personally, when I study for my own pleasure, that automatically includes wanting the pleasure of those I'm close to. Not a whole country. But on the other hand, I suspect that if a substantial number of citizens in my country decided to practice EP, the outcome would likely increase my freedom of choice and thus my options for pleasure.

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### **Post by "Elayne" of June 9, 2019 at 12:56 PM**

Bradley, when I get farther along (which may be slow due to my other activities), I would be interested in interviewing you! I hope, as Cassius suggested, that you will also post on this forum how your philosophy affects your interactions with your children! I will not quote anything without permission.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of June 9, 2019 at 4:39 PM**

### [Quote from Elayne](#)

When I read DeWitt, I realized how important the contexts were. For myself personally, when I study for my own pleasure, that automatically includes wanting the pleasure of those I'm close to. Not a whole country

That is the impression I got from DeWitt too and I think it is persuasive. I have read many times in other places that Greek education was heavily oriented toward "producing good citizens." if so, that would make total sense with DeWitt's interpretation -- that we are educating ourselves (in philosophy and in most all else too) not "for Greece" but for ourselves. Which does not mean that Greece is not an important part of our world, but that ultimately Greece itself is not the highest value - especially if "Greece" is not the equivalent of "our friends." Under the right circumstances I could imagine that the two could be roughly equivalent, but the larger and more problematic the political situation the less equivalent that would be.

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## **Post by “bradley.whitley” of June 13, 2019 at 11:17 AM**

Just a quick note...EP is very kid friendly. We discussed death and dying last night at dinner. My 7 year old out of the blue says "people are worried more about being dead and what things are like after they die that they dont enjoy living!" "Just enjoy things dont be worried about dying because you won't feel nothing. Right Daddy?" Exactly son.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of June 13, 2019 at 11:23 AM**

Brad do you have pets (cats, dogs or whatever)? I can only speak for myself but I know when I was a child and as I got older that the experience of having pets die on me became major events in my reconciling myself to death.

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## **Post by “bradley.whitley” of June 13, 2019 at 12:19 PM**

Yes, the death of our Boston terrier prompted our discussion.

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### **Post by “Elli” of June 16, 2019 at 9:14 AM**

[Cassius](#) please we have to not forget that Epicurus on "wise man" said for Cynics that are the enemies of Hellas, because Cynics were antisocial. Epicurus here just reminds to a friend what is the philosophy that he studies for himself that is the Epicurean and totally different than the philosophy that is studied by the mob in Hellas. And which is this philosophy that is preferred for studies by the mob in Hellas and not only in Hellas ? Of course that was and still is the dialectics and the IDEALISM by Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics.

The accurate translation on this ES76 from ancient greek text is :

"As you grow old you are such as I urge you to be and you know well what is your philosophy and what is the philosophy in the rest of Hellas. That is why I congratulate you!"

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### **Post by “Elli” of June 16, 2019 at 9:26 AM**

Epicurus that he was impious worshiping the gods of his polis/country... He does not accept an absolute justice the same for ALL, how would be an anarchist, a cosmopolitan, a globalist and ALL the mobs of the people of this world are one and the same under the rules of the same laws and justice ? No, these are ideas by Platonists and stoics !