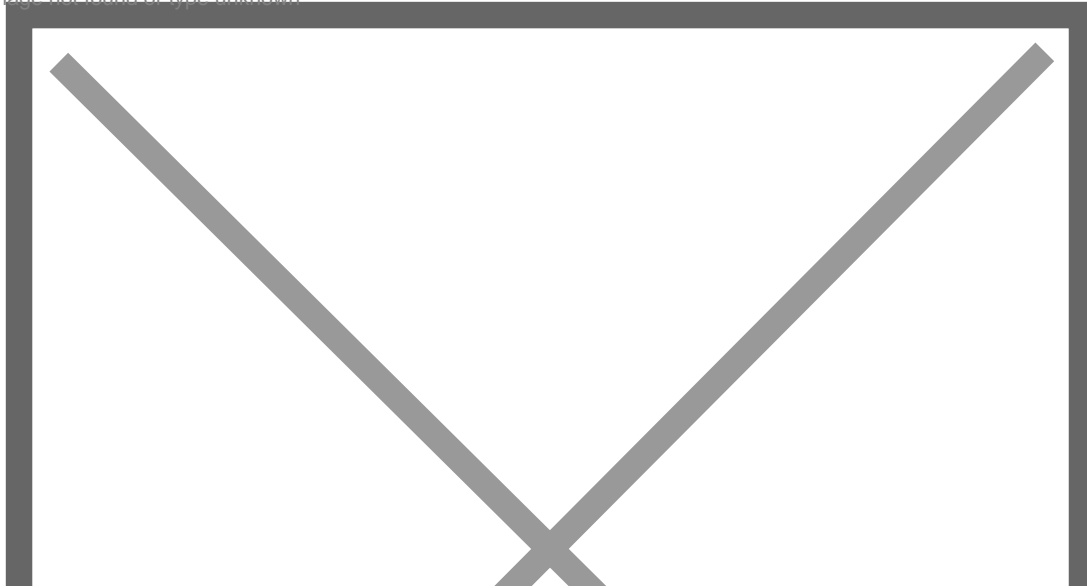


# About EpicureanFriends.com - Including Community Standards And Posting Policy

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## 1. About EpicureanFriends.com: Classical Epicurean Philosophy Unadulterated by Humanism, Platonism, Stoicism, Buddhism, or Other Eclecticism

EpicureanFriends.com was established online in 2015 as a place for the promotion and discussion of Classical Epicurean Philosophy, free from contemporary political controversies and unadulterated by Humanism, Platonism, Stoicism, Buddhism, or other competing viewpoints.

Our website is both a discussion forum and a resource hub for the study of Epicurean philosophy. Here you will find help and guidance in the study of important ancient texts, as well as many types of information helpful to the understanding of Epicurus. All are welcome to read the forums, but posting privileges are reserved for registered users.

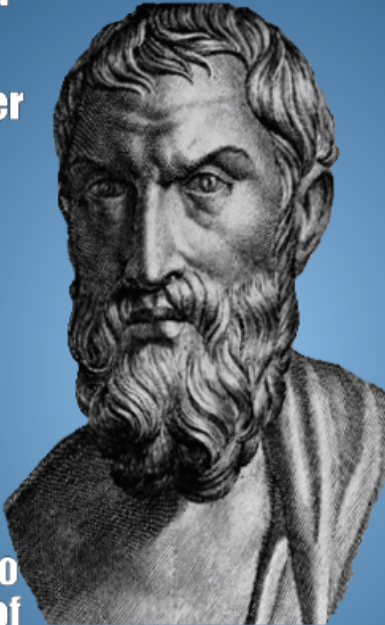
There are many places on the internet where other philosophies can be studied, but few if any which are dedicated exclusively to Epicurus. We work hard to keep the forum both friendly to all but also firmly Epicurean, so if you are looking for a truly supportive community of Epicurean Friends, you've come to the right place.

Join us as we study Epicurus, apply Epicurean philosophy to our own lives, and *"strike a blow for Epicurus, that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams, who alone had and imparted true insight into the good, and who brought deliverance to all that consorted with him."* ([Lucian - "Alexander the Oracle-Monger"](#))

What follows on this page are our most important operating documents and rules. Complete agreement with every position of Epicurus is not required prior to registering an account, but you must agree to our [Terms of Use](#) and comply with our other rules of conduct if you wish to participate in our forums.

## 2. Core Aspects Of Epicurean Philosophy Emphasized At EpicureanFriends.com

The EpicureanFriends forum works to ensure that the activities of the forum are consistent with the ancient Epicurean school by emphasizing the following points. Participants are not required to agree with all of these, but we do require that the spirit of the philosophy as presented here be respected in all public posting on the forum.



**Nothing can be created from nothing.**

**Nature has no gods over her.**

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

**Death is nothing to us.**

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

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

**All sensations are "true."**

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

**Pleasure is the guide of life.**

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

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

## 2.1. No Thing Can Be Created From Nothing.

1. Major Implications:
  1. The universe as a whole is eternal and was never created by supernatural gods.
2. Citations:
  1. Epicurus to Herodotus, line 38
    1. Bailey: "[N]othing is created out of that which does not exist: for if it were, everything would be created out of everything with no need of seeds. "
  2. Lucretius 1:146
    1. Bailey: "This terror then, this darkness of the mind, must needs be scattered not by the rays of the sun and the gleaming shafts of day, but by the outer view and the inner law of nature; whose first rule shall take its start for us from this, that nothing is ever begotten of nothing by divine will."
3. Notes: A more precise translation than Bailey renders would likely be: "Nothing can be created from that which did not previously exist." In general the point is that everything comes from that which already exists, meaning that nothing comes from that which does not already exist.
4. [Discussion Forum](#)

## 2.2. Nature Has No Gods Over Her.

1. Major Implications:
  1. Supernatural gods do not exist.
2. Citations:
  1. Epicurus To Herodotus, line 77
    1. Bailey: Furthermore, the motions of the heavenly bodies and their turnings and eclipses and risings and settings, and kindred phenomena to these, must not be thought to be due to any being who controls and ordains or has ordained them and at the same time enjoys perfect bliss together with immortality (for trouble and care and anger and kindness are not consistent with a life of blessedness, but these things come to pass where there is weakness and fear and dependence on neighbors).
  2. Epicurus to Pythocles, line 97
    1. Bailey: Next the regularity of the periods of the heavenly bodies must be understood in the same way as such regularity is seen in some of the events that happen on earth. And do not let the divine nature be introduced at any point into these considerations, but let it be preserved free from burdensome duties and in entire blessedness.
3. **Lucretius Book 2 - 1090**
  1. Bailey - "And if you learn this surely, and cling to it, nature is seen, free at once, and quit of her proud rulers, doing all things of her own accord alone, **without control of gods.**"
  2. Humphries - Holding this knowledge, you can't help but see, That nature has no tyrants over her, But always acts of her own will; **she has no part of any godhead whatsoever.**"
  3. Brown 1743 - "These things, if you rightly apprehend, Nature will appear free in her operations, **wholly from under the power of domineering deities**, and to act all things voluntarily, and of herself, without the assistance of gods."
  4. Munro - "If you well apprehend and keep in mind these things, nature free at once and rid of her haughty lords is seen to do all things spontaneously of herself without the meddling of the gods. "
  5. M.F. Smith - "Once you obtain a firm grasp of these facts, you see that nature is her own mistress and is exempt from the oppression of arrogant despots, accomplishing everything by herself spontaneously and independently and free from the jurisdiction of the gods. "
3. Notes: Alternate ways to consider this would include: "There are no supernatural causes," or "The gods, however they are defined, have no impact on the cosmos," or "If gods exist, they don't control

the universe nor do they bestow blessings or curses on humans." The point is that there are no supernatural, divine, or mystical forces that intervene in or create the universe.

4. [Discussion Forum](#)

### 2.3. Do Not Assign To The Gods Anything That Is Inconsistent With Incorruption And Blessedness

1. Major Implications:

1. It is necessary to have a proper view of the nature of divinity.

2. Citations:

1. Letter to Menoeceus [123] The things which I used unceasingly to commend to you, these do and practice, considering them to be the first principles of the good life. First of all believe that god is a being immortal and blessed, even as the common idea of a god is engraved on men's minds, and do not assign to him anything alien to his incorruption or ill-suited to his blessedness: but believe about him everything that can uphold his blessedness and incorruption. For gods there are, since the knowledge of them is by clear vision. But they are not such as the many believe them to be: for indeed they do not consistently represent them as they believe them to be. And the impious man is not he who popularly denies the gods of the many, but he who attaches to the gods the beliefs of the many. [124] For the statements of the many about the gods are not conceptions derived from sensation, but false suppositions, according to which the greatest misfortunes befall the wicked and the greatest blessings (the good) by the gift of the gods. For men being accustomed always to their own virtues welcome those like themselves, but regard all that is not of their nature as alien.
2. Lucretius 6:43. Brown: "The various wonders men behold in the earth and in the heavens perplex their minds, trembling and in suspense, and make them humble with the fear of the gods, and press them groveling to the ground; and being ignorant of the cause of these events, they are forced to confess the sovereignty and give up everything to the command of these deities. And the effects they are unable to account for by reason they imagine were brought about by the influence of the gods; for such as well know that the gods lead a life of tranquility and ease, if they should still wonder by what power the world is carried on, especially in the the things they see over their heads in the heavens above, they relapse again into their old superstition; they raise over themselves a set of cruel tyrants who, the wretches fancy, can do all things, because they know nothing of what can or what cannot be, or by what means a finite power is fixed to every being, and a boundary immovable which it cannot pass. Such are more liable to mistakes and to be carried widely from the right way. [68] Unless you purge your mind of such conceits, and banish them from your breast, and forebear to think unworthily of the gods, by charging them with things that break their peace, those sacred deities you will believe are always angry and offended with you; not that the supreme power of the gods can be so ruffled as to be eager to punish severely in their resentments, but because you fancy those beings, who enjoy a perfect peace in themselves, are subject to anger and the extravagances of revenge: and therefore you will no more approach their shrines with an easy mind, no more in tranquility and peace will you be able to receive the images, the representations of their divine forms, that form from their pure bodies and strike powerfully upon the minds of men: From hence you may collect what a wretched life you are to lead."
3. Lucretius 3:14-30 (Johnston): "For once that philosophy which arose in your godlike mind has begun to speak about the nature of things, then terrors in the mind disperse, the world's walls fall open, I see what is going on in all the void, the majesty and calm habitations of the gods reveal themselves in places where no winds disturb, no clouds bring showers, no white snow falls congealed with bitter frost to harm them, the always cloudless aether vaults above, and they smile, as far and as wide as the light spreads out. Then, too, nature provides plentiful supplies of all things – their peace is not disturbed by anything at any time. The regions of Acheron, by contrast, are nowhere to be seen, and earth presents no barrier to a full view of all

events going on throughout the void lying underfoot. Godlike pleasure and awe take hold of me up there with these things, to think that nature, through your genius, is laid out so clearly, so openly exposed on every side."

4. Notes:
5. [Discussion Forum](#).

## 2.4. Death Is Nothing To Us.

### 1. Major Implications:

1. Consciousness ends forever at death.
2. There is no life after death.
3. There is no punishment or reward after death.
4. The manner of our death in terms of whether the steps leading up to it are painful, and the timing of our death, in terms of how long we live, are significant to us. This doctrine focuses on what happens (nothing) to the individual after death.
5. The reverse is also true: Given that for an eternity before birth and for an eternity after death we have no life at all, our life while we have it is extremely important to us.

### 2. Citations:

#### 1. Epicurus' Principal Doctrine 2

1. Bailey: "Death is nothing to us, for that which is dissolved is without sensation; and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us."

#### 2. Epicurus to Menoeceus Line 125

1. Bailey: "For there is nothing terrible in life for the man who has truly comprehended that there is nothing terrible in not living. So that the man speaks but idly who says that he fears death not because it will be painful when it comes, but because it is painful in anticipation. For that which gives no trouble when it comes is but an empty pain in anticipation. So death, the most terrifying of ills, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist, death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist. It does not then concern either the living or the dead, since for the former it is not, and the latter are no more."

#### 3. Lucretius 3:912

1. Bailey: [912] This too men often do, when they are lying at the board, and hold their cups in their hands, and shade their faces with garlands: they say from the heart, 'Brief is this enjoyment for us puny men: soon it will be past, nor ever thereafter will it be ours to call it back.' As though in death this were to be foremost among their ills, that thirst would burn the poor wretches and parch them with its drought, or that there would abide with them a yearning for any other thing. For never does any man long for himself and life, when mind and body alike rest in slumber. For all we care sleep may then be never-ending, nor does any yearning for ourselves then beset us. And yet at that time those first-beginnings stray not at all far through our frame away from the motions that bring sense, when a man springs up from sleep and gathers himself together. Much less then should we think that death is to us, if there can be less than what we see to be nothing; for at our dying there follows a greater turmoil and scattering abroad of matter, nor does any one wake and rise again, whom the chill breach of life has once overtaken.

#### 4. Lucretius Book Three [560]

1. Munro: "Therefore, again and again I say, when the enveloping body has been all broken up and the vital airs have been forced out, you must admit that the senses of the mind and the soul are dissolved, since the cause of destruction is one and inseparable for both body and soul."

#### 5. Lucretius Book Three [679]

1. Munro: "Wherefore, again and again I say, we must believe souls to be neither without a birth nor exempted from the law of death; for we must not believe that they could have been so completely united with our bodies, if they found their way into them from without, nor since they are so closely interwoven with them, does it appear that they can



get out unharmed and unloose themselves unscathed from all the sinews and bones and joints."

3. *Notes:* There is no existence after death. There is one life to live, and, afterwards, we no longer exist except in the memories of friends and loved ones.
4. [Discussion Forum](#)

## 2.5. There Is No Necessity To Live Under The Control Of Necessity.

1. Major Implications:
  1. "Hard determinism" is observably wrong because we can control when we exit life.
  2. This is not an invitation to conclude that suicide is a proper course because necessity rules our existence, but to the contrary an affirmation that the fact that we have the power to end our lives is an example of how necessity does not rule every aspect of our existence, implying also that not only life and death but many decisions of lesser importance are also under our control.
2. Citations:
  1. Epicurus' Vatican Saying 9
    1. Bailey: "Necessity is an evil, but there is no necessity to live under the control of necessity."
  2. Epicurus' Vatican Saying 40
    1. Bailey: "The man who says that all things come to pass by necessity cannot criticize one who denies that all things come to pass by necessity: for he admits that this too happens of necessity."
  3. Epicurus to Menoeceus Line 133
    1. Bailey: "[133] For indeed who, think you, is a better man than he who holds reverent opinions concerning the gods, and is at all times free from fear of death, and has reasoned out the end ordained by nature? He understands that the limit of good things is easy to fulfill and easy to attain, whereas the course of ills is either short in time or slight in pain; he laughs at (destiny), whom some have introduced as the mistress of all things. (He thinks that with us lies the chief power in determining events, some of which happen by necessity) and some by chance, and some are within our control; for while necessity cannot be called to account, he sees that chance is inconstant, but that which is in our control is subject to no master, and to it are naturally attached praise and blame. [134] For, indeed, it were better to follow the myths about the gods than to become a slave to the destiny of the natural philosophers: for the former suggests a hope of placating the gods by worship, whereas the latter involves a necessity which knows no placation. As to chance, he does not regard it as a god as most men do (for in a god's acts there is no disorder), nor as an uncertain cause (of all things) for he does not believe that good and evil are given by chance to man for the framing of a blessed life, but that opportunities for great good and great evil are afforded by it. [135] He therefore thinks it better to be unfortunate in reasonable action than to prosper in unreason. For it is better in a man's actions that what is well chosen (should fail, rather than that what is ill chosen) should be successful owing to chance.
3. *Notes:*
4. [Discussion Forum](#)

## 2.6. He Who Says "Nothing Can Be Known" Knows Nothing.

1. Major Implications
  1. Radical skepticism is self-contradictory nonsense.
2. Citations:
  1. Lucretius 4:469
    1. [469] Again, if any one thinks that nothing is known, he knows not whether that can be known either, since he admits that he knows nothing. Against him then I will refrain from joining issue, who plants himself with his head in the place of his feet. And yet were I to

grant that he knows this too, yet I would ask this one question; since he has never before seen any truth in things, whence does he know what is knowing, and not knowing each in turn, what thing has begotten the concept of the true and the false, what thing has proved that the doubtful differs from the certain?

2. Diogenes of Oinoanda, Fragment 5

1. Smith: "Now Aristotle and those who hold the same Peripatetic views as Aristotle say that nothing is scientifically knowable, because things are continually in flux and, on account of the rapidity of the flux, evade our apprehension. We on the other hand acknowledge their flux, but not its being so rapid that the nature of each thing [is] at no time apprehensible by sense-perception. And indeed [in no way would the upholders of] the view under discussion have been able to say (and this is just what they do [maintain] that [at one time] this is [white] and this black, while [at another time] neither this is [white nor] that black, [if] they had not had [previous] knowledge of the nature of both white and black."

3. Notes:

4. [Discussion Forum](#)

## 2.7. All Sensations Are "True."

1. Major Implications: Error does not occur in the senses, but in the mind in forming opinions about what the sensations are reporting.

2. Citations:

1. Epicurus to Herorodut X 51b] (Yonge) "And, on the other side, error could not be possible, if we did not receive some other motion also, a sort of initiative of intelligence connected, it is true, with direct representation, but going beyond that representative. These conceptions being connected with direct perception which produces the representation, but going beyond it."
2. Epicurus On Nature Book 28, Sedley trans, fr. 13, col. 6 inf. - "I also frequently reflected that if, when I raised difficulties which someone might have turned against us, he should claim that what used to be assimilated from ordinary language was the same as used to be practiced in the written work, many might well conclude that in those days false opinion was represented in that language, whether through an empirical process, an image-based process, or a theoretical process, or through a non-empirical process, not following one of our current divisions, but simply arising from an internal movement; but that now, because the means of expression is adapted to additional ends, discrimination provides a lead towards the truth. However, let no one ever try to get even with you by linking with you any trace of this suspicion; but [turn] to the entire faculty of empirical reasoning..."
3. (Aetius 4.8.10) "Leucippus, Democritus, and Epicurus say that sensation and thought arise in the soul from images that approach from outside, for neither of these can occur to anyone without the image falling upon him."
4. (Aetius 4.9.5 - 6) "Epicurus says that every sensation and every impression is true, but of the opinions some are true and some false; and sensation gives us a false picture in one respect only, namely with regard to objects of thought; but the impression does so in two respects, for there is impression of both sense objects and objects of thought. Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Epicurus, and Heraclides say that the particular sensations of their own object occur in accordance with the matching sized of the pores, each of the sense objects corresponding to each sense."

5. Notes:

6. Discussion Forum

## 2.8. Virtue Is Not Absolute Or An End In Itself - All Good And Evil Consists In Sensation.



1. Major Implications:

1. Absolute ideas of good and evil, as well as virtue, are not valid because such things do not have an independent existence in reality.
2. Good and evil are relevant only to living beings.
3. Justice is relative to the individuals involved and is not the same for all people at all times, and at all places.
4. What is just at some times for some persons will change with circumstances.
5. Justice is but one example of a "virtue," and just as there is no absolute justice there is no absolute virtue.

2. Citations:

1. **Letter to Menoeceus [124]**

1. *Bailey*: "Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us. **For all good and evil consists in sensation**, but death is deprivation of sensation. And therefore a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not because it adds to it an infinite span of time, but because it takes away the craving for immortality."
2. *Hicks*: "Accustom thyself to believe that death is nothing to us, **for good and evil imply sentience**, and death is the privation of all sentience; therefore a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not by adding to life an illimitable time, but by taking away the yearning after immortality."
3. *Inwood-Gerson*: "Get used to believing that death is nothing to us. **For all good and bad consists in sense-experience**, and death is the privation of sense-experience. Hence, a correct knowledge of the fact that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life a matter for contentment, not by adding a limitless time [to life] but by removing the longing for immortality."
4. *Epicurus Wiki (Epicurism.info)*: "Accustom yourself to thinking that death is no concern to us. All things good and bad are experienced through sensation, but sensation ceases at death. So death is nothing to us, and to know the truth of this makes a mortal life happy -- not by adding infinite time, but by removing the desire for immortality."
5. Epicurus' Principal Doctrine 33
  1. *Bailey*: "Justice never is anything in itself, but in the dealings of men with one another, in any place whatever, and at any time, it is a kind of compact not to harm or be harmed."
6. Epicurus' Principal Doctrine 36
  1. *Bailey*: "In its general aspect, justice is the same for all, for it is a kind of mutual advantage in the dealings of men with one another; but with reference to the individual peculiarities of a country, or any other circumstances, the same thing does not turn out to be just for all."
7. Epicurus' Principal Doctrine 37
  1. *Bailey*: "Among actions which are sanctioned as just by law, that which is proved, on examination, to be of advantage, in the requirements of men's dealings with one another, has the guarantee of justice, whether it is the same for all or not. But if a man makes a law, and it does not turn out to lead to advantage in men's dealings with each other, then it no longer has the essential nature of justice. And even if the advantage in the matter of justice shifts from one side to the other, but for a while accords with the general concept, it is nonetheless just for that period, in the eyes of those who do not confound themselves with empty sounds, but look to the actual facts."
8. Epicurus' Principal Doctrine 38:
  1. *Bailey*: "Where, provided the circumstances have not been altered, actions which were considered just have been shown not to accord with the general concept, in actual practice, then they are not just. But where, when circumstances have changed, the same actions which were sanctioned as just no longer lead to advantage, they were just at the time, when they were of advantage for the

dealings of fellow-citizens with one another, but subsequently they are no longer just, when no longer of advantage."

3. [Discussion Forum](#)

4. [Discussion Forum](#)

## 2.9. Pleasure is The Guide of Life.

1. Major Implications:

1. Neither supernatural gods nor ideal forms nor logic or rationalism are the guides of life.

2. Citations:

1. As to the definition of Pleasure, see the following citations and the related answer in the [FAQ List](#):

1. Pleasure is one of the feelings, of which there are only two - pleasure and pain:

1. ***Diogenes Laertius 10:34*** : "The internal sensations they say are two, pleasure and pain, which occur to every living creature, and the one is akin to nature and the other alien: by means of these two choice and avoidance are determined."

2. ***On Ends 1:30*** : "Moreover, seeing that if you deprive a man of his senses there is nothing left to him, it is inevitable that nature herself should be the arbiter of what is in accord with or opposed to nature. Now what facts does she grasp or with what facts is her decision to seek or avoid any particular thing concerned, unless the facts of pleasure and pain?

2. Given that there are only two feelings, you are feeling one or the other at all times if you are feeling anything at all:

1. ***On Ends 1:38***: Therefore Epicurus refused to allow that there is any middle term between pain and pleasure; what was thought by some to be a middle term, the absence of all pain, was not only itself pleasure, but the highest pleasure possible. Surely any one who is conscious of his own condition must needs be either in a state of pleasure or in a state of pain. Epicurus thinks that the highest degree of pleasure is defined by the removal of all pain, so that pleasure may afterwards exhibit diversities and differences but is incapable of increase or extension.

3. As to pleasure and pain being separate and unmixed in any particular feeling:

1. ***PD03*** : "The limit of quantity in pleasures is the removal of all that is painful. Wherever pleasure is present, as long as it is there, there is neither pain of body, nor of mind, nor of both at once."

4. All of those taken together show that Epicurus did not limit pleasure to what we generally think of as sensory stimulation, but included within pleasure all states of awareness of life that are not felt to be painful. You can see an explicit example of that here in regard to discussion of one's hand in its normal state of affairs, whenever it is not in some affirmative pain:

1. ***On Ends 1:39*** : For if that were the only pleasure which tickled the senses, as it were, if I may say so, and which overflowed and penetrated them with a certain agreeable feeling, then even a hand could not be content with freedom from pain without some pleasing motion of pleasure. But if the highest pleasure is, as Epicurus asserts, to be free from pain, then, O Chrysippus, the first admission was correctly made to you, that the hand, when it was in that condition, was in want of nothing; but the second admission was not equally correct, that if pleasure were a good it would wish for it. For it would not wish for it for this reason, inasmuch as whatever is free from pain is in pleasure.

5. This position is asserted by comparing the conditions of two people who are not in pain, but who are seemingly in very different conditions: A host at a party who is pouring wine to a guest who is drinking it. Here is the example:

1. ***On Ends 2:16*** : "This, O Torquatus, is doing violence to one's senses; it is wresting out of our minds the understanding of words with which we are

*imbued; for who can avoid seeing that these three states exist in the nature of things: first, the state of being in pleasure; secondly, that of being in pain; thirdly, that of being in such a condition as we are at this moment, and you too, I imagine, that is to say, neither in pleasure nor in pain; in such pleasure, I mean, as a man who is at a banquet, or in such pain as a man who is being tortured. What! do you not see a vast multitude of men who are neither rejoicing nor suffering, but in an intermediate state between these two conditions? No, indeed, said he; I say that all men who are free from pain are in pleasure, and in the greatest pleasure too. Do you, then, say that the man who, not being thirsty himself, mingles some wine for another, and the thirsty man who drinks it when mixed, are both enjoying the same pleasure?” [Torquatus objects to the question as quibbling but the implicit answer is “yes” based on the condition of “not being thirsty” and “the thirsty man who drinks” both being conditions of pleasure.”]*

6. This means that Epicurus was defining all conditions of awareness where pain is not present to be pleasure. It's significant to remember "conditions of awareness" because he is not saying that a rock, which is not feeling pain, to be feeling pleasure. Only the living can feel pleasure or pain, but when you are aware of your condition all of your feelings can be categorized as either painful or pleasurable. You can see this sweeping categorization stated specifically here:

1. **On Ends 2:9** : Cicero: "...[B]ut unless you are extraordinarily obstinate you are bound to admit that 'freedom from pain' does not mean the same thing as 'pleasure.'" Torquatus: "Well but on this point you will find me obstinate, for it is as true as any proposition can be."
2. **On Ends 2:11**: Cicero: Still, I replied, granting that there is nothing better (that point I waive for the moment), surely it does not therefore follow that what I may call the negation of pain is the same thing as pleasure?" Torquatus: "Absolutely the same, indeed the negation of pain is a very intense pleasure, the most intense pleasure possible."

7. This is how Epicurus can say that the wise man is continuously feeling pleasure, and how he defines the absence of pain as the highest pleasure. He is not talking about the most intense stimulation, he is talking philosophically about the most pure and complete condition of pleasure where pleasure is defined as a condition where absolutely all pain is gone. The wise man is about to consider this condition to be the most complete pleasure even though it is not the most intense stimulation:

1. **On Ends 1:56** : *By this time so much at least is plain, that the intensest pleasure or the intensest annoyance felt in the mind exerts more influence on the happiness or wretchedness of life than either feeling, when present for an equal space of time in the body. We refuse to believe, however, that when pleasure is removed, grief instantly ensues, excepting when perchance pain has taken the place of the pleasure; but we think on the contrary that we experience joy on the passing away of pains, even though none of that kind of pleasure which stirs the senses has taken their place; and from this it may be understood how great a pleasure it is to be without pain. [57] But as we are elated by the blessings to which we look forward, so we delight in those which we call to memory. Fools however are tormented by the recollection of misfortunes; wise men rejoice in keeping fresh the thankful recollection of their past blessings. Now it is in the power of our wills to bury our adversity in almost unbroken forgetfulness, and to agreeably and sweetly remind ourselves of our prosperity. But when we look with penetration and concentration of thought upon things that are past, then, if those things are bad, grief usually ensues, if good, joy.*
2. **On Ends 1:62** : *But these doctrines may be stated in a certain manner so as not merely to disarm our criticism, but actually to secure our sanction. For this is the way in which Epicurus represents the wise man as continually happy; he*

*keeps his passions within bounds; about death he is indifferent; he holds true views concerning the eternal gods apart from all dread; he has no hesitation in crossing the boundary of life, if that be the better course. Furnished with these advantages he is continually in a state of pleasure, and there is in truth no moment at which he does not experience more pleasures than pains. For he remembers the past with thankfulness, and the present is so much his own that he is aware of its importance and its agreeableness, nor is he in dependence on the future, but awaits it while enjoying the present; he is also very far removed from those defects of character which I quoted a little time ago, and when he compares the fool's life with his own, he feels great pleasure. And pains, if any befall him, have never power enough to prevent the wise man from finding more reasons for joy than for vexation.*

3. As to Pleasure being the guide of life:

1. **Lucretius Book Two [167]:**

1. *Munro*: "But some in opposition to this, ignorant of matter, believe that nature cannot without the providence of the gods, in such nice conformity to the ways of men, vary the seasons of the year and bring forth crops, aye and all the other things, which **divine pleasure, the guide of life**, prompts men to approach, escorting them in person and enticing them by her fondlings to continue their races through the arts of Venus, that mankind may not come to an end."
2. *Rouse*: "But some in opposition to this, knowing nothing of matter, believe that without the gods' power nature cannot with so exact conformity to the plans of mankind change the seasons of the year, and produce crops, and in a word all else which **divine pleasure, the guide of life**, persuades men to approach, herself leading them and coaxing them, through the ways of Venus, to beget their generations, that the human race may not come to an end."
3. *Humphries*: "Some people do not know how matter works. They think that nature needs the will of the gods to fit the seasons of the year so nicely to human needs, to bring to birth the crops And other blessings, which our guide to life, the radiance of pleasure, makes us crave through Venus' agency. "

2. **Epicurus' Letter to Menoeceus [129]:**

1. *Bailey*: [129] And for this cause we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good.

4. *Notes*: There is no higher good than pleasure, no greater evil than pain.

5. **Discussion Forum**

## 2.10. By "Pleasure" We Mean All Experience That Is Not Painful

1. Major Implications:

2. Citations:

1. *Diogenes Laertius X-34* : "The internal sensations they say are two, pleasure and pain, which occur to every living creature, and the one is akin to nature and the other alien: by means of these two choice and avoidance are determined."
2. *On Ends Book One, 30* : "Moreover, seeing that if you deprive a man of his senses there is nothing left to him, it is inevitable that nature herself should be the arbiter of what is in accord with or opposed to nature. Now what facts does she grasp or with what facts is her decision to seek or avoid any particular thing concerned, unless the facts of pleasure and pain?"
3. *On Ends Book One, 38* : Therefore Epicurus refused to allow that there is any middle term between pain and pleasure; what was thought by some to be a middle term, the absence of all pain, was not only itself pleasure, but the highest pleasure possible. Surely any one who is conscious of his own condition must needs be either in a state of pleasure or in a state of pain. Epicurus thinks that the highest degree of pleasure is defined by the removal of all pain,

so that pleasure may afterwards exhibit diversities and differences but is incapable of increase or extension."

4. On Ends Book One, 39 : For if that were the only pleasure which tickled the senses, as it were, if I may say so, and which overflowed and penetrated them with a certain agreeable feeling, then even a hand could not be content with freedom from pain without some pleasing motion of pleasure. But if the highest pleasure is, as Epicurus asserts, to be free from pain, then, O Chrysippus, the first admission was correctly made to you, that the hand, when it was in that condition, was in want of nothing; but the second admission was not equally correct, that if pleasure were a good it would wish for it. For it would not wish for it for this reason, inasmuch as whatever is free from pain is in pleasure.
5. On Ends Book Two, 9 : Cicero: "...[B]ut unless you are extraordinarily obstinate you are bound to admit that 'freedom from pain' does not mean the same thing as 'pleasure.'" Torquatus: "Well but on this point you will find me obstinate, for it is as true as any proposition can be."
6. On Ends, Book Two, 11: Cicero: Still, I replied, granting that there is nothing better (that point I waive for the moment), surely it does not therefore follow that what I may call the negation of pain is the same thing as pleasure?" Torquatus: "Absolutely the same, indeed the greatest, beyond which none greater can possibly be." [Plane idem, inquit, et maxima quidem, qua fieri nulla maior potest. (Cic. Fin. 2.11)]
7. On Ends Book Two, 16 : "This, O Torquatus, is doing violence to one's senses; it is wresting out of our minds the understanding of words with which we are imbued; for who can avoid seeing that these three states exist in the nature of things: first, the state of being in pleasure; secondly, that of being in pain; thirdly, that of being in such a condition as we are at this moment, and you too, I imagine, that is to say, neither in pleasure nor in pain; in such pleasure, I mean, as a man who is at a banquet, or in such pain as a man who is being tortured. What! do you not see a vast multitude of men who are neither rejoicing nor suffering, but in an intermediate state between these two conditions? No, indeed, said he; I say that all men who are free from pain are in pleasure, and in the greatest pleasure too. Do you, then, say that the man who, not being thirsty himself, mingles some wine for another, and the thirsty man who drinks it when mixed, are both enjoying the same pleasure?"
8. Notes:
9. Discussion Forum:

## 2.11. Life Is Desirable, But Unlimited Time Contains No Greater Pleasure Than Limited Time.

1. Major Implications: Life is generally desirable because it generally affords the opportunity for pleasure.
2. Citations:
  1. [PD19](#). Infinite time contains no greater pleasure than limited time, if one measures, by reason, the limits of pleasure.
  2. Letter to Menoeceus 126: "And he who counsels the young man to live well, but the old man to make a good end, is foolish, not merely because of the desirability of life, but also because it is the same training which teaches to live well and to die well."
  3. [PD18](#). The pleasure in the flesh is not increased when once the pain due to want is removed, but is only varied: and the limit as regards pleasure in the mind is begotten by the reasoned understanding of these very pleasures, and of the emotions akin to them, which used to cause the greatest fear to the mind.
  4. [PD20](#). The flesh perceives the limits of pleasure as unlimited, and unlimited time is required to supply it. But the mind, having attained a reasoned understanding of the ultimate good of the flesh and its limits, and having dissipated the fears concerning the time to come, supplies us with the complete life, and we have no further need of infinite time; but neither does the



mind shun pleasure, nor, when circumstances begin to bring about the departure from life, does it approach its end as though it fell short, in any way, of the best life.

5. [PD21](#). He who has learned the limits of life knows that that which removes the pain due to want, and makes the whole of life complete, is easy to obtain, so that there is no need of actions which involve competition.
6. Notes:
7. [Discussion Forum](#):

## Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean o-Epicurean, But Epicurean

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

The following is a short summary of principles which are important for understanding Epicurus and participating in discussion at the EpicureanFriends Forum. It is not intended to address all aspects of Epicurean philosophy. As time allows we will supplement the citations below with more citations and explanatory articles.

1. Not "flourishing," "human potential," "self-actualization," or "meaningfulness," but happiness grounded in the feeling of pleasure.
2. Not "absence of pain" as a full statement of the goal of life, but "the Feelings are two, pleasure and pain" and "Pleasure is the beginning and the end of a happy life."
3. Not virtue for the sake of virtue, but virtue as instrumental for the attainment of pleasure.
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6. Not "hard determinism" but "some things happen from necessity, some from chance, and others through our own choice."
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- 9 Not only "short term hedonism," but "it is to continuous pleasures that I invite you."



10. Not “rationalism,” but “all reason is dependent upon sensations.”

11. Not fearful of death nor careless of losing life, but valuing life for the opportunity of pleasure it brings.

#### Citations:

1. Not “flourishing” or “human potential” or “self-actualization” or “meaningfulness,” but happiness grounded in the feeling of pleasure.

1. Diogenes of Oinoanda: If, gentlemen, the point at issue between these people and us involved inquiry into “what is the means of happiness?” and they wanted to say “the virtues” (which would actually be true), it would be unnecessary to take any other step than to agree with them about this, without more ado. But since, as I say, the issue is not “what is the means of happiness?” but “what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?,” I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues, which are inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end.

2. Not “absence of pain” as a full statement of the goal of life, but “the Feelings are two, pleasure and pain” and “Pleasure is the beginning and the end of a happy life.”

1. Article by Elayne Coulter [“On Pain, Pleasure, And Happiness”](#)
2. Diogenes Laertius: “They affirm that there are two states of feeling, pleasure and pain, which arise in every animate being, and that the one is favorable and the other hostile to that being, and by their means choice and avoidance are determined; and that there are two kinds of inquiry, the one concerned with things, the other with nothing but words. So much, then, for his division and criterion in their main outline.”
3. Letter to Menoeceus: “Wherefore we call pleasure the alpha and omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing.”
4. [PD03](#). The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain. When such pleasure is present, so long as it is uninterrupted, there is no pain either of body or of mind or of both together.
5. [PD22](#). We must consider both the ultimate end and all clear sensory evidence, to which we refer our opinions; for otherwise everything will be full of uncertainty and confusion.
6. Torquatus in On Ends: “Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement.”
7. [VS63](#). There is also a limit in simple living, and he who fails to understand this falls into an error as great as that of the man who gives way to extravagance.

3. Not virtue for the sake of virtue, but virtue as instrumental for the attainment of pleasure.

1. Diogenes of Oinoanda: If, gentlemen, the point at issue between these people and us involved inquiry into “what is the means of happiness?” and they wanted to say “the virtues” (which would actually be true), it would be unnecessary to take any other step than to agree with them about this, without more ado. But since, as I say, the issue is not “what is the means of happiness?” but “what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?,” I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues, which are inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of

the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end.

2. Torquatus in Cicero's On Ends: "Those who place the Chief Good in virtue alone are beguiled by the glamour of a name, and do not understand the true demands of nature. If they will consent to listen to Epicurus, they will be delivered from the grossest error. Your school dilates on the transcendent beauty of the virtues; but were they not productive of pleasure, who would deem them either praiseworthy or desirable? We esteem the art of medicine not for its interest as a science, but for its conduciveness to health; the art of navigation is commended for its practical and not its scientific value, because it conveys the rules for sailing a ship with success. So also Wisdom, which must be considered as the art of living, if it effected no result would not be desired; but as it is, it is desired, because it is the artificer that procures and produces pleasure."

4. Not "the greatest good for the greatest number," but "Every desire must be confronted with this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished and what if it is not?"

1. [VS71](#). Question each of your desires: "What will happen to me if that which this desire seeks is achieved, and what if it is not?"
2. [VS50](#). (PD 8 ) No pleasure is a bad thing in itself, but the things which produce certain pleasures entail disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves.
3. This is of possible application here (we should discuss) Diogenes of Oinoanda, fragment 32: "Suppose, then, someone were to ask someone, though it is a naive question, «who is it whom these virtues benefit?», obviously the answer will be «man.» The virtues certainly do not make provision for these birds flying past, enabling them to fly well, or for each of the other animals: they do not desert the nature with which they live and by which they have been engendered; rather it is for the sake of this nature that the virtues do everything and exist.
4. [PD06](#). "In order to obtain protection from other men, any means for attaining this end is a natural good."
5. [PD39](#). "The man who best knows how to meet external threats makes into one family all the creatures he can; and those he can not, he at any rate does not treat as aliens; and where he finds even this impossible, he avoids all dealings, and, so far as is advantageous, excludes them from his life."
6. [PD40](#). "Those who possess the power to defend themselves against threats by their neighbors, being thus in possession of the surest guarantee of security, live the most pleasant life with one another...."
7. Torquatus in On Ends: "Yet nevertheless some men indulge without limit their avarice, ambition and love of power, lust, gluttony and those other desires, which ill-gotten gains can never diminish but rather must inflame the more; inasmuch that they appear proper subjects for restraint rather than for reformation."

5. Not "humanism," "individualism", "collectivism", "egoism" or "altruism" or "social progress," but friendship which "is formed and maintained by means of community of life among those who have reached the fullness of pleasure."

1. Diogenes Laertius (Bailey) "That friendship too has practical needs as its motive: one must indeed lay its foundations (for we sow the ground too for the sake of crops), but it is formed and maintained by means of community of life among those who have reached the fullness of pleasure"
2. [PD17](#). The just man is most free from disturbance, while the unjust is full of the utmost disturbance.
3. [PD14](#). Protection from other men, secured to some extent by the power to expel and by material prosperity, in its purest form comes from a quiet life withdrawn from the multitude.
4. [PD27](#). Of all the means which wisdom acquires to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is friendship.

[PD31](#). Natural justice is a pledge of reciprocal benefit, to prevent one man from harming or being harmed by another.

5. [PD32](#). Those animals which are incapable of making binding agreements with one another not to inflict nor suffer harm are without either justice or injustice; and likewise for those peoples who either

could not or would not form binding agreements not to inflict nor suffer harm.

6. [PD33](#). There never was such a thing as absolute justice, but only agreements made in mutual dealings among men in whatever places at various times providing against the infliction or suffering of harm.
7. [PD34](#). Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which is associated with the apprehension of being discovered by those appointed to punish such actions.
8. [PD35](#). It is impossible for a man who secretly violates the terms of the agreement not to harm or be harmed to feel confident that he will remain undiscovered, even if he has already escaped ten thousand times; for until his death he is never sure that he will not be detected.
9. [PD36](#). In general, justice is the same for all, for it is something found mutually beneficial in men's dealings, but in its application to particular places or other circumstances the same thing is not necessarily just for everyone.
10. [PD37](#). Among the things held to be just by law, whatever is proved to be of advantage in men's dealings has the stamp of justice, whether or not it be the same for all; but if a man makes a law and it does not prove to be mutually advantageous, then this is no longer just. And if what is mutually advantageous varies and only for a time corresponds to our concept of justice, nevertheless for that time it is just for those who do not trouble themselves about empty words, but look simply at the facts.
11. [PD38](#). Where without any change in circumstances the things held to be just by law are seen not to correspond with the concept of justice in actual practice, such laws are not really just; but wherever the laws have ceased to be advantageous because of a change in circumstances, in that case the laws were for that time just when they were advantageous for the mutual dealings of the citizens, and subsequently ceased to be just when they were no longer advantageous.
12. [PD39](#). The man who best knows how to meet external threats makes into one family all the creatures he can; and those he can not, he at any rate does not treat as aliens; and where he finds even this impossible, he avoids all dealings, and, so far as is advantageous, excludes them from his life.
13. [PD40](#). Those who possess the power to defend themselves against threats by their neighbors, being thus in possession of the surest guarantee of security, live the most pleasant life with one another; and their enjoyment of the fullest intimacy is such that if one of them dies prematurely, the others do not lament his death as though it called for pity.

6. Not "hard determinism" but "some things happen from necessity, some from chance, and others through our own choice."

1. Letter to Menoeceus: "Fate, which some introduce as sovereign over all things, he scorns, affirming rather that some things happen of necessity, others by chance, others through our own agency. For he sees that necessity destroys responsibility and that chance is inconstant; whereas our own actions are autonomous, and it is to them that praise and blame naturally attach. It were better, indeed, to accept the legends of the gods than to bow beneath that yoke of destiny which the natural philosophers have imposed. The one holds out some faint hope that we may escape if we honor the gods, while the necessity of the naturalists is deaf to all entreaties. Nor does he hold chance to be a god, as the world in general does, for in the acts of a god there is no disorder; nor to be a cause, though an uncertain one, for he believes that no good or evil is dispensed by chance to men so as to make life blessed, though it supplies the starting-point of great good and great evil. He believes that the misfortune of the wise is better than the prosperity of the fool. It is better, in short, that what is well judged in action should not owe its successful issue to the aid of chance."
2. Lucretius Book Two: "Once again, if every motion is always linked on, and the new always arises from the old in order determined, nor by swerving do the first-beginnings make a certain start of movement to break through the decrees of fate, so that cause may not follow cause from infinite time; whence comes this free will for living things all over the earth, whence, I ask, is it wrested from fate, this will whereby we move forward, where pleasure leads each one of us, and swerve likewise in our motions neither at determined times nor in a determined direction of place, but just where our mind has carried us? For without doubt it is his own will which gives to each one a start for this

movement, and from the will the motions pass flooding through the limbs. Do you not see too how, when the barriers are flung open, yet for an instant of time the eager might of the horses cannot burst out so suddenly as their mind itself desires? For the whole store of matter throughout the whole body must be roused to movement, that then aroused through every limb it may strain and follow the eager longing of the mind; so that you see a start of movement is brought to pass from the heart, and comes forth first of all from the will of the mind, and then afterwards is spread through all the body and limbs. Nor is it the same as when we move forward impelled by a blow from the strong might and strong constraint of another. For then it is clear to see that all the matter of the body moves and is hurried on against our will, until the will has reined it back throughout the limbs. Do you not then now see that, albeit a force outside pushes many men and constrains them often to go forward against their will and to be hurried away headlong, yet there is something in our breast, which can fight against it and withstand it? And at its bidding too the store of matter is constrained now and then to turn throughout the limbs and members, and, when pushed forward, is reined back and comes to rest again. Wherefore in the seeds too you must needs allow likewise that there is another cause of motion besides blows and weights, whence comes this power born in us, since we see that nothing can come to pass from nothing. For weight prevents all things coming to pass by blows, as by some force without. But that the very mind feels not some necessity within in doing all things, and is not constrained like a conquered thing to bear and suffer, this is brought about by the tiny swerve of the first-beginnings in no determined direction of place and at no determined time.

## 7. Not supernaturalism but materialism.

1. Letter to Herodotus: "First of all, that nothing is created out of that which does not exist: for if it were, everything would be created out of everything with no need of seeds. And again, if that which disappears were destroyed into that which did not exist, all things would have perished, since that into which they were dissolved would not exist. Furthermore, the universe always was such as it is now, and always will be the same. For there is nothing into which it changes: for outside the universe there is nothing which could come into it and bring about the change. Moreover, the universe is bodies and space: for that bodies exist, sense itself witnesses in the experience of all men, and in accordance with the evidence of sense we must of necessity judge of the imperceptible by reasoning, as I have already said. And if there were not that which we term void and place and intangible existence, bodies would have nowhere to exist and nothing through which to move, as they are seen to move. And besides these two, nothing can even be thought of either by conception or on the analogy of things conceivable such as could be grasped as whole existences and not spoken of as the accidents or properties of such existences."
2. Lucretius, Book 1: But now, to weave again at the web, which is the task of my discourse, all nature then, as it is of itself, is built of these two things: for there are bodies and the void, in which they are placed and where they move hither and thither. For that body exists is declared by the feeling which all share alike; and unless faith in this feeling be firmly grounded at once and prevail, there will be naught to which we can make appeal about things hidden, so as to prove aught by the reasoning of the mind. And next, were there not room and empty space, which we call void, nowhere could bodies be placed, nor could they wander at all hither and thither in any direction; and this I have above shown to you but a little while before. Besides these there is nothing which you could say is parted from all body and sundered from void, which could be discovered, as it were a third nature in the list. For whatever shall exist, must needs be something in itself; and if it suffer touch, however small and light, it will increase the count of body by a bulk great or maybe small, if it exists at all, and be added to its sum. But if it is not to be touched, inasmuch as it cannot on any side check anything from wandering through it and passing on its way, in truth it will be that which we call empty void.

8. Not "Supernatural Gods," or "Life After Death," but confidence in a fully material universe, and for those for whom wisdom is possible, "then truly the life of the gods will pass to men."

1. Epicurus' Letter to Menoeceus: Meditate therefore on these things and things akin to them night and day by yourself; and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, but you shall live like a god among men. For a man who lives among immortal blessings is

not like unto a mortal being.

2. Diogenes of Oinoanda Fr. 56: [So we shall not achieve wisdom universally], since not all are capable of it. But if we assume it to be possible, then truly the life of the gods will pass to men. For everything will be full of justice and mutual love, and there will come to be no need of fortifications or laws and all the things which we contrive on account of one another. As for the necessities derived from agriculture, since we shall have no slaves at that time (for indeed [we ourselves shall plough] and dig and tend [the plants] and [divert] rivers and watch over [the crops], we shall] ... such things as ... not ... time ..., and such activities, [in accordance with what is] needful, will interrupt the continuity of the [shared] study of philosophy; for [the] farming operations [will provide what our] nature wants.

9 Not only "short term hedonism" but "it is to continuous pleasures that I invite you."

1. Letter to Anaxarchus, Bailey Extant Remains p. 127. "But I summon you to continuous pleasures and not to vain and empty virtues which have but disturbing hopes of results."
2. Letter to Menoeceus: "And even as men choose of food not merely and simply the larger portion, but the more pleasant, so the wise seek to enjoy the time which is most pleasant and not merely that which is longest."
3. Torquatus in On Ends: "The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement.

10. Not "rationalism," but "all reason is dependent upon sensations."

1. Diogenes Laertius: "Nor is there anything which can refute sensations or convict them of error: one sensation cannot convict another and kindred sensation, for they are equally valid; nor can one sensation refute another which is not kindred but heterogeneous, for the objects which the two senses judge are not the same; nor again can reason refute them, for reason is wholly dependent on sensation; nor can one sense refute another, since we pay equal heed to all. And the reality of separate perceptions guarantees the truth of our senses. But seeing and hearing are just as real as feeling pain."
2. Lucretius Book Four: "Again, if any one thinks that nothing is known, he knows not whether that can be known either, since he admits that he knows nothing. Against him then I will refrain from joining issue, who plants himself with his head in the place of his feet. And yet were I to grant that he knows this too, yet I would ask this one question; since he has never before seen any truth in things, whence does he know what is knowing, and not knowing each in turn, what thing has begotten the concept of the true and the false, what thing has proved that the doubtful differs from the certain? You will find that the concept of the true is begotten first from the senses, and that the senses cannot be gainsaid. For something must be found with a greater surety, which can of its own authority refute the false by the true. Next then, what must be held to be of greater surety than sense? Will reason, sprung from false sensation, avail to speak against the senses, when it is wholly sprung from the senses? For unless they are true, all reason too becomes false"

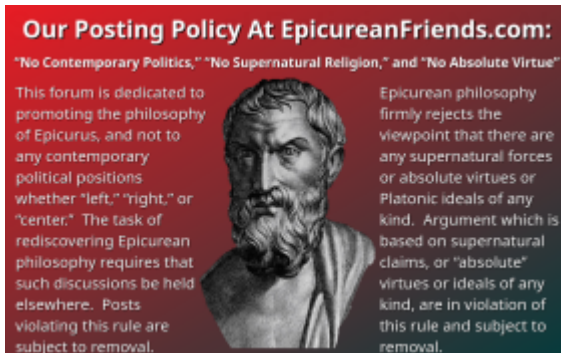
11. Not fearful of death nor careless of losing life, but valuing life for the opportunity of pleasure it brings.

1. Letter to Menoeceus: "The wise man does not deprecate life nor does he fear the cessation of life. The thought of life is no offense to him, nor is the cessation of life regarded as an evil. And even as men choose of food not merely and simply the larger portion, but the more pleasant, so the wise



seek to enjoy the time which is most pleasant and not merely that which is longest. And he who admonishes the young to live well and the old to make a good end speaks foolishly, not merely because of the desirability of life, but because the same exercise at once teaches to live well and to die well. Much worse is he who says that it were good not to be born, but when once one is born to pass quickly through the gates of Hades. For if he truly believes this, why does he not depart from life? It would be easy for him to do so once he were firmly convinced. If he speaks only in jest, his words are foolishness as those who hear him do not believe."

#### 4. Key Posting Policies: No Contemporary Politics; No Absolute Virtue



1. **No Contemporary Politics:** This forum is dedicated to promoting the philosophy of Epicurus, and not to any partisan political positions whether "left," "right," or "center." The task of rediscovering Epicurean philosophy requires that such discussions be held elsewhere. Posts and accounts regularly violating this rule are subject to removal.
2. **No Supernatural Religion:** Epicurean philosophy firmly rejects the viewpoint that there are any supernatural forces which define right and wrong conduct, and so arguments based on such premises are improper for the forum. Posts and accounts regularly violating this rule are subject to removal.
3. **No Absolute Virtue:** Epicurean philosophy rejects the existence of or absolute virtues or Platonic ideals of any kind. Argument which is based on claims of "absolute" virtues or ideals are improper for this forum and are subject to removal.

Background: While viewpoints on particular virtues and particular ideals are extremely important to our personal pleasure and happiness, those things will *differ* between people over time and location and all sorts of circumstances. The overall goal of promoting Epicurean philosophy has to deal with this tension: We are (through Epicurean doctrines) encouraging everyone to understand and follow their feelings of pleasure, but at the same time we have to recognize that not everyone is going to have the same feelings about the same things, and that conflicts are going to arise between people under certain circumstances. If we allow the forum to be dominated by one moral or political viewpoint, then the project is jeopardized. The general promotion of Epicurean philosophy is more important to the mission than any day-to-day political position. Those who wish to pursue a special moral or political viewpoint may do so in their own circles.

#### 5. Community Standards / Rules of the Forum

[Update 07/27/19: This post was originally made April 29, 2015, with subsequent revisions as indicated. These standards are implemented by our [Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean](#) and our [Posting Policy statements](#) and [associated posts](#). A longer version with discussion of this Community Standards / Rules of the Forum section is [here](#).]



The purpose of EpicureanFriends.com is to promote the study and application of the philosophy of Epicurus, and to allow those who share this goal to communicate with one another in a dedicated community. Posters should conduct themselves as part of a community of friends and always treat each other with graciousness and consideration "*as though Epicurus were watching*." Participants should be ready to receive criticism and disagreement with *frankness, firmness, and good humor*, and should consult the principles followed by ancient Epicureans, as referenced in Norman DeWitt's article "[Organization and Procedure in Epicurean Groups](#)."

Participants in this site are in no way "members" of any organization or pledged to hold a particular set of beliefs. Participants are in no way submitting to any authority or doctrinal rules. However, this community was founded by and for people who are devoted to applying Epicurean philosophy accurately, and experience has shown that there are identifiable characteristics that typify the sincere Epicurean, as exemplified by the following:

1. An EpicureanFriend does not have a Stoic-like ascetic personality which views pleasure with suspicion and seeks to eliminate all but the most necessary of desires. The Epicurean follows Vatican Saying 63 in holding: "Frugality too has a limit, and the man who disregards it is like him who errs through excess."
2. An EpicureanFriend is not a "Tranquillist" who construes "absence of pain" as something separate or distinct from the goal of pleasurable living. The Epicurean understands that "pleasure" describes a faculty which encompasses all pleasurable physical and mental activities and which is in itself the guide to the best way of life. The Epicurean holds: "[W]e call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good." The Epicurean understands that there is no need for argument to prove that "pleasure" is desirable. The Epicurean remembers that Epicurus said "I know not how to conceive the good, apart from the pleasures of taste, of sex, of sound, and the pleasures of beautiful form." The Epicurean therefore recognizes with Cicero that Epicurus taught that "Nothing is preferable to a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures." (Cicero - Defense of Publius Sestius)
3. An EpicureanFriend does not seek "virtue" or "nobility" or a "greater good" as superior to the goal of living pleurably. The Epicurean understands "virtue" as a tool which successfully produces pleasurable living, not an end in itself. The Epicurean agrees with Diogenes of Oinoanda: "But since, as I say, the issue is not 'what is the means of happiness?' but 'what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?,' I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues, which are inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end."
4. An EpicureanFriend does not embrace Platonic / Aristotelian / Socratic devotion to "logic" and "reason" as goals in themselves which are superior to pleasurable living. The Epicurean views logic and reason as tools for producing pleasurable living.
5. An EpicureanFriend does not embrace Platonic / Aristotelian / Socratic "idealism" which holds that truth exists only in some other and higher dimension above the reality in which we live. The Epicurean holds that this life is all that we have, and that the state of being dead is a state of nothingness to us.
6. An EpicureanFriend does not embrace Stoic / Platonic / Aristotelian / Socratic religious abstractions such as supernatural gods, prime movers or divine fire.
7. An EpicureanFriend does not embrace eclecticism or the radical skepticism that holds that reality is not knowable and that nothing is certain.

Please also observe the following:

- 1) Posters shall respect the right of each member to "**live unknown**" to the extent that he or she sees fit. Postings here are available to others to reread for an indefinite time in the future, so please post responsibly.

2) Posters shall adhere to the purpose of this forum, which is to participate in a community of friends to promote the philosophy of *Epicurus*. Many forums for the discussion of other philosophers exist elsewhere, and discussion of other philosophies should be done here only to assist in the better understanding of Epicurus. Posts which are primarily discussion of non-Epicurean ideas should be made elsewhere.

3) In order to encourage the free flow of information, participants are welcome to register with a pseudonym / "pen name." Use of real names is not necessary, and posting of personal information of any kind should be minimized. Participants are free to disclose personal information about themselves as they see fit, but personal information about participants shall not be disclosed without their consent.

4) Discussion of specific modern political issues should be severely limited. That is not because Epicurean philosophy has no application to these issues, but because we are in the early stages of building a viable Epicurean community, and contentious discussion of specific political issues which divide us before that can be accomplished is not consistent with the goal of this site. Please keep the big picture in perspective, and if you must discuss application of Epicurus to modern politics please do it privately or elsewhere.

5) Do not create posts composed of nothing other than links. Any links to locations outside the forum must contain comment on whether they are endorsed or criticized which explain how they relate to the forum. (Added 09/15/19)

6) All posts are subject to moderation. Leadership of the forum retains at all times the right to accept, reject, and remove any post and any participant at any time for any reason.

## 6. Major Characteristics of the Epicurean View Of Life

([The following list was originally prepared and posted in 2017.](#))

The ancient Epicurean viewpoint emphasizes the following:

### 6.1. Physics

1. A Universe that operates by and contains only Natural, not supernatural, forces.
2. A Universe with nothing divine, mystical, or imaginary outside it, but only a reality within it that is endless in extent.
3. A Universe neither created by gods nor springing into existence at a single moment in time, but eternal, with nothing coming from or going to nothing.
4. A Universe where the only eternal things are the ultimate particles which comprise it, with no eternal Platonic forms, Aristotelian essences, or rationalistic ideals constituting a "higher truth."
5. A Universe neither ordered nor chaotic, but operating on Natural principles derived from the properties of the ultimate particles and the qualities that emerge from their movements and combinations.
6. A Universe which contains life that is neither mystical nor unique to Earth, but plentiful throughout eternal time and boundless space.
7. A Universe in which individual consciousness exists to experience Pleasure and Pain only for a single lifetime, not before birth or after death.

### 6.2. Canonics / Epistemology

1. Knowledge that is based on observation through natural faculties, not abstract logic or rationalism.
2. Knowledge that embraces emotions as things to be felt, not suppressed.
3. Knowledge that holds with confidence that facts which are based on clear evidence are true, rejecting both radical skepticism and belief that is contrary to or without evidence.

### 6.3. Ethics

1. Ethics holding that the goal of life is Pleasure, not virtue or religious piety.
2. Ethics holding virtue, wisdom, and friendship to be valuable tools for producing Pleasure, but not ends in themselves.
3. Ethics in which desires are evaluated as to whether they are natural or necessary, not so as to choose only what is necessary or to reduce desires to a minimum, but so that those desires which are chosen will maximize Pleasure and minimize Pain.
4. Ethics in which the goal of life is to fill experience with Pleasures and to reduce Pains to a minimum, not to set up paradoxical abstractions such as “detachment” or “tranquility” or “absence of pain” in the place of Pleasure as ordinarily understood.
5. Ethics based on achieving Pleasure within a society of friends, protected and separated from enemies, with political involvement, whether of engagement or withdrawal, chosen or avoided according to its efficacy in achieving Pleasurable living.
6. Ethics based on embracing free will as core to human existence, rejecting both determinism and wishful thinking that all things are possible.
7. Ethics in which the decision to engage in sexual love is evaluated – as are all choices and avoidances – according to the total amount of Pleasure and Pain the choice will bring, not as an illusory ideal to be pursued under the intoxication of the moment.
8. Ethics which does not seek for “meaning” in false religion or idealism, but in living for the goal of experiencing the most Pleasure and the least Pain that our personal circumstances will allow.
9. Ethics in which “Pleasure” as a thing to be pursued means the experience of any number and combination of mental and physical feelings which to us are pleasurable, and “Pain” as a thing to be avoided means the experience of any number and combination of mental and physical feelings which to us are painful.
10. Ethics in which “Pleasure” describes the highest goal for each living being, which cannot be improved upon, because Pleasure is the only faculty given by Nature through which we know what to choose, and the highest experience of Pleasure any being is capable of achieving is the complete filling of its experience with Pleasures, undiluted with any mixture of Pains.
11. Ethics in which Pains are sometimes chosen and Pleasures are sometimes avoided, but for no other purpose than the achievement of the greater pleasure or lesser pain arising from that particular choice or avoidance.
12. Ethics in which there is no such thing as absolute justice that applies to all people at all times at all places, only relationships which change according to circumstance so as to obtain the most pleasure and the least pain for those who are part of the agreement.