## **Reading Recommendations**

We always recommend that readers consult the original works of Epicurus, and we maintain here at the forum a collection of <u>Ancient Epicurean Texts</u>, including <u>Diogenes Laertus Book 10</u> (which contains all of Epicurus' Letters), <u>Lucretius</u>' De Rerum Natura, and many others.

Thus for our regular readers the key links to primary material are as follows. These are also included in the front page right sidebar and various other locations:

- 1. Side by side Diogenes Laertius, which includes All Letters of Epicurus
- 2. Side by side Lucretius "On the Nature of Things"
- 3. Side by side Torquatus on Ethics from Cicero's On Ends
- 4. Side by side Velleius on Epicurus' Views of Divinity, from Cicero's On The Nature of The Gods

For people who are brand new to Epicurus, we recommend that you start with the two books we recommend most: <u>Epicurus and His Philosophy</u> by Norman DeWitt, and <u>Living For Pleasure: An Epicurean Guide to Life</u> by Emily Austin:

- 1. The most sweeping, thorough, and innovative "textbook" of Epicurean philosophy available is Norman DeWitt's "<u>Epicurus and His Philosophy</u>." No other book presents the full sweep and detail of the philosophy as well as this one. The opening chapter of DeWitt's book can be <u>read for free here</u>, and an article ("Philosophy For The Millions") summarizing DeWitt's perspective is here.
- 2. The most current and best general introduction to Epicurean ethics is Dr. Emily Austin's "Living For Pleasure." This is a very readable introduction to Epicurean ideas on how to live that is consistent with the general approach here at EpicureanFriends. Our 2023 interview with Dr. Austin on the Lucretius Today podcast is a good introduction to her book.

There are of course other goods books about Epicurus, and we maintain a section of our forum devoted to disssion of them <a href="here">here</a>. A word of caution is appropriate: There are many different interpretations of Epicurus, and many of them "adulterated" with Stoic, Buddhist, Judeo-Christian, Platonic, or other philosophies and religions, according to the preferences of their authors. We recommend that those seeking to understand Epicurus start with <a href="Epicurus and His Philosophy">Epicurus and His Philosophy</a> and <a href="Living For Pleasure">Living For Pleasure</a>, and then review Diogenes Laertius Book Ten and Lucretius, before moving to other works. The DeWitt and Austin books provide a firm grounding in classical Epicureanism, and they point out where the reader can expect to find controversies elsewhere as to what Epicurus really taught.

For those who are familiar with Epicurus and want to research remaining fragments, please check here for the Harris edition of the Usener Epicurea in PDF form.

The full list we recommend for students of Epicurus is as follows:

- 1. "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Norman DeWitt
- 2. "Living For Pleasure" by Emily Austin
- 3. The Biography of Epicurus by Diogenes Laertius. This includes the surviving letters of Epicurus, including those to Herodotus, Pythocles, and Menoeceus.
- 4. Bernier's Three Discourses By Gassendi, On Happiness, Virtue, and Liberty Caution! Gassendi compromises with religion and deviates from Epicurus on gods, death, terminating one's life when appropriate, and probably other issues as well. Another example is Chapter 5 (pdf page 113) which takes too ascetic a view of pleasure. These are huge problems which must be kept in mind in reading this book and limit its usefulness. That having been said, however, Gassendi generally makes clear where he departs from Epicurus, and even in his analysis of pleasure he makes clear that Epicurus should not be interpreted as advocating inaction. With these caveats, most of the rest of the material is very useful and deserves review due to its importance as a link in the chain transmitting Epicurus to

the modern world.

- 5. "On The Nature of Things" by Lucretius (a poetic abridgement of Epicurus' "On Nature")
- 6. "Epicurus on Pleasure" An article by Boris Nikolsky
- 7. The chapters on Epicurus in Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks On Pleasure."
- 8. Cicero's "On Ends" Torquatus Section
- 9. Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" Velleius Section
- 10. The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda Martin Ferguson Smith translation
- 11. A Few Days In Athens" Frances Wright with the criticisms referenced here.
- 12. Lucian of Samosata Lucian mentions Epicurus in a number of articles, but among the best are **Alexander the Oracle-Monger, Hermotimus**, and others listed here.
- 13. Philodemus "On Methods of Inference" (De Lacy version, including his appendix on the history of the Epicurean Canon)
- 14. Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom by David Sedley, an in depth exploration of how Lucretius interpreted Epicurus
- 15. The Sculpted Word by Bernard Frischer, a study of Epicurean bronzes and marbles from the ancient world.
- 16. Haris Dimitriadis' "Epicurus' And The Pleasant Life"
- 17. Consider also the following essays/lectures/letters:
  - 1. The Letter of Cosma Raimondi
  - 2. Norman DeWitt's "Philosophy For The Millions"
  - 3. John Tyndall's Belfast Address
  - 4. An essay on Lucretius from George Santayana's Three Philosophical Poets
  - 5. Prof. lan Johnston's Lecture on Lucretius
  - 6. Lucy Hutchinson's <u>Letter to the Earl of Anglesey</u>, disavowing her very early translation of Lucretius

<u>Here is a "library" page</u> at NewEpicurean.com with links to where many additional translations are available for free on the internet.

## **Profile of Past Reading**

Discussion of this FAQ entry at EpicureanFriends.com is here.