

# Epicurus

## Introduction Part 1 – Why Should We Care about Epicurus?

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"O Epicurus! You who were first able to raise so bright a light from so great a darkness, shedding light on the blessings of life! . . . For as soon as your system of philosophy that arose in your divine intellect begins to proclaim aloud the nature of things, the terrors of the mind disperse and the walls of the world open wide. . . . You placed human existence from amid great waves of trouble and great darkness of the mind into a condition of tranquility and a clear light. . . . I follow you, the glory of the Greeks!" —Titus Lucretius Carus

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*The Best of Epicurus: The Life, Writings & Teachings of Epicurus the Greek Philosopher.*

## Introduction Part 1

### Why Should We Care about Epicurus?

**M**ENTION THE ANCIENT Greek philosopher Epicurus to anyone, and you may well be gently redirected with a few questions. Do you mean *epicureanism*? Are you talking about gourmet food? Are *you* an epicure? If the questions are flavored with a certain enthusiasm, chances are your partner in conversation may next reveal his bona fides as a foodie. And he'll have a point. When many hear *Epicurus*, they think *good stuff* and especially *good food*.

There's a simple reason why. Unless you are sitting in an undergraduate philosophy class or browsing in a bookstore, the only time you're likely to run into the name *Epicurus* or the term *epicureanism* is when it is grafted onto the name of a restaurant or a

specialty store or some purveyor of fine things. For example, not far from The Classics Cave office in Sugar Land, there is Rice Epicurean Market in Houston. The grocery store's website insists that "Our passion is food"—which is doubtlessly an appropriate and promising claim for a supermarket. Rice Epicurean maintains that our "seafood ... could only be fresher if you went out into the deep blue yourself."

Such epicurean fish-fussing is incredibly old. Athenaeus of Naucratis, the second century AD author of the *Deipnosophists*—what may be rendered as *The Dinner Experts*, or, we might say, *The Sophisticated Foodies*—tells us about many "people [who] have been great epicures about fish."<sup>1</sup> Their epicureanism had to

do with how the fish was treated (slaves were to wash the fish rather than rubbing it down with oil), kinds of fish (conger and pike were considered best), and methods of cooking the fish (boiling, roasting, and the like).

As for eateries, Epicurus Restaurant in Detroit serves “breakfast all day, and some of the biggest burgers in town.” According to one report, “no matter how big your appetite, you will not leave the Epicurus Restaurant feeling hungry.” To some extent, getting plenty is precisely what this kind of epicureanism—both ancient and modern—is all about. Filling up! But more than that, it is about a sophisticated *gnosis* and refined tastes. You *know* you’re filling up with the best.

Athenaeus presents us with a window onto this kind of epicurean phenomenon. “The comic poets,” he explains, “running down the Epicureans, attack them as mere servants and ministers of pleasure and a lack of self-control.” He goes on to offer many examples. First, there is the epicurean man who compared an eel, then considered a delicacy, to Helen, the most beautiful woman in the ancient world. “But when an eel was served, a certain epicurean man . . . said, ‘Here is the Helen of the feast. I, therefore, will be the Paris!’” Then there is the advice of “the epicure Arcestratus” regarding what sort of pastry chef one should have on hand. He “counsels us to have a Phoenician or Lydian slave for a baker since he was not ignorant that the best bread makers come from Cappadocia.” Finally, Athenaeus reports the third century BC Stoic philosopher Chrysippus’ story about Philoxenus. “I know an epicure, who used to convince the cooks to set the very hot dishes before him so that he would have them all to himself.” Apparently, no other participant in the feast could keep up with Philoxenus’ pace of eating, so voracious and all-consuming was his appetite.

Athenaeus traces this mouthful-of-pleasure brand of epicureanism back to Odysseus in Homer’s *Odyssey*. He writes that “Odysseus in Homer appears to have been the original guide to Epicurus regarding this much-spoken-of pleasure.” And this makes some sense. Anyone who’s ever read Homer knows the heroes all have heroic appetites for roasted meat and whole seas of wine. To demonstrate the point, Athenaeus cites Odysseus’ speech to Alcinous:

As for me, I declare that there is nothing better or more delightful than when a whole people join in merry festivity together . . . while before them the table is loaded with bread and meats, and the cupbearer draws wine from the mixing bowl and pours it into all the goblets.<sup>2</sup>

Athenaeus finishes with Epicurus himself, assigning this declaration to him: “The origin and root of all good is the pleasure of the stomach.”<sup>3</sup>

The problem with Athenaeus’ portrayal of Epicurus and Epicureanism (or better yet, *epicureanism*, no capital letter) is that it is not exactly accurate. Not at all, in fact. Fan of a simple diet of barley cakes and water—which, he claimed, would help him compete with Zeus himself in terms of bliss—Epicurus was no *epicure*. According to professor of philosophy Dane Gordon, “His manner of life was much more like that of an abstemious monk.”<sup>4</sup>

It’s true. The historian of philosophy Frederick Copleston concluded the same decades ago. “The Epicurean ethic leads to a moderate asceticism, self-control and independence.”<sup>5</sup> In short, Epicurus was a proponent of a deliberate way of life that would help what may be termed philosophical epicures (or Epicures) to think wisely, live well, and be happy.

## WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT EPICURUS?

The year was 176 AD. The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius was in Athens after months of touring the eastern empire. Aside from being initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries with his infamous son,

Commodus, and taking steps to reform the government of the city, Marcus acted to recognize the long-time influence of philosophy in Greece and the wider Mediterranean world. He thus endowed four chairs

of philosophy, singling out the major schools. One endowment went to the Epicureans.<sup>6</sup>

The emperor's act came some five hundred years after Epicurus established his school. That's far longer than any university has existed in the United States, where Harvard, founded in 1636, is the oldest. Altogether, Epicurus' school carried on from its opening around 305 BC to well into the third or even fourth century AD.

About a half century after the emperor endowed the chair, the ancient biographer Diogenes Laertius reported that "while nearly every other school has died out, the Epicurean school continues forever without interruption through countless reigns of one scholar after another."<sup>7</sup> By the early fifth century, however, the school seems to have come to an end. Writing at that time, Augustine of Hippo explained that the school's "ashes are so cold that not a single spark can be struck from them."<sup>8</sup> Given his own animus toward Epicureanism, he was doubtlessly not disappointed. Nevertheless, over time the school was immensely influential. According to Gordon, "Epicurus's teachings provided a philosophy of life for large numbers of people through six or seven hundred years."<sup>9</sup>

This brings us to the first reason why we should care about Epicurus. For well over half a millennium his teachings provided the guiding light for a great number of human souls. His was a new way of looking at things that for many could explain reality, calm fears, and provide tranquility. As the professor of classics Howard Jones tells it, "from the beginning Epicurean teaching fired the popular imagination."<sup>10</sup> We'll see that this was both positive and negative in terms of praise and blame. But for those who turned toward the man and his teachings and embraced his way of life, Epicurus was nothing short of "a god," a bright light shining in the darkness.<sup>11</sup>

Over time the light itself shone throughout the Mediterranean world. Radiating from its epicenter in Athens, followers practiced Epicureanism in the islands of the Aegean and along the coasts of Asia Minor (Turkey). Key cities were Mytilene on the island of Lesbos and Lampsacus along the Hellespont. There were also pockets of Epicureans in Syria and

Egypt. Later, Epicureanism spread west to Roman Italy. By the time Marcus Aurelius endowed the Epicurean chair in 176 AD, the philosophy was the guiding light for a large number of people throughout the Roman Empire, both east and west. In later times, whether directly or indirectly, Epicureanism impacted some in the Byzantine Empire and some among the Kievan Rus, and in the West its flame was relit during the Renaissance and grew larger from the seventeenth century on.

The human dimensions of Epicureanism were equally as broad in a way that is similar, perhaps, to Saint Paul's first century AD declaration that in Christ Jesus "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free man, male nor female."<sup>12</sup> Epicurus invited everyone to practice his philosophy. Leontion and Themista, for example, were two women involved in the school from the beginning. Diogenes Laertius informs us that Epicurus dedicated his work, the *Neocles*, to Themista, and he wrote letters to her.<sup>13</sup> Themista's husband Leonteus of Lampsacus practiced the philosophy as well. Aside from free persons, slaves also participated. Epicurus' own slave Mys—his name means Mouse—joined him in his philosophical studies and way of life. As for the young, they "flocked to him," and those advanced in years found solace in Epicurus' philosophy in old age.<sup>14</sup> There were Greeks and non-Greeks, and those with every shade of appearance. Diogenes Laertius tells us about two men—both named Ptolemy and both from Alexandria in Egypt—who eventually led the school. "The one was black (*melas*)," he reports, "and the other was white (*leukos*)."<sup>15</sup> Lastly, there were the rich and the not-so-rich, the powerful and the not-so-powerful.

The first point in brief is that Epicureanism was important to many people throughout many lands over a long period of time. Just as various forms of Buddhism or Hinduism, Christianity or Islam are important for many today, so was Epicureanism the path to follow for many individuals over hundreds and hundreds of years. The question, of course, is why.

The twofold answer brings us to the second reason why we should care about Epicurus—his

theoretical and practical philosophy, both of which have been extremely influential and helpful to many. Simply put, people followed Epicurus for his theoretical ideas and practical wisdom.

Theoretically, Epicurus influenced the ancient and modern worlds in two significant ways. One influence came through his method of gaining knowledge, his epistemology. We can observe this method being transmitted from his early follower and friend Metrodorus in his work *On Sensation*, through a series of other followers, including the Roman poet Lucretius, whom we will discuss in a moment, to later followers such as the second century AD Diogenes of Oenoanda, who chiseled into a long wall his proclamation of the blessings of Epicureanism, including the warning that the mind can go astray without the touchstone of the senses. A last to mention is John Locke—though, to be sure, there were many others in between. In broad outlines, we can trace Locke’s “primacy of sensation in the formation of ideas” and the whole train of British empiricism back to Epicurus.<sup>16</sup>

The other theoretical influence came through Epicurus’ natural philosophy or physics, namely, his theory about atoms and the void. It is possible that modern physics would not exist had there been no Epicurus.<sup>17</sup> Again, the impact began early on with his followers. The most significant person, however, was Lucretius, whom I mentioned a moment ago. It was his first century BC poem *On the Nature of Things* (*De Rerum Natura*) that spread Epicurus’ vision of nature throughout the Roman world. Two centuries later, Marcus Aurelius wrestled with the Epicurean position in his *Meditations*. Regarding nature, there are just two options, he observed. Providence or chance. Order or atoms. By providence and order, he meant the Stoic view of reality, including the directing mind of the cosmos. By chance and atoms, he was referring to Epicurus’ atoms randomly dancing and swerving to form whole worlds and everything therein, including human reality.

This chance-based aspect of Epicurus’ philosophy made it hard for his physics to gain hold in Christian Europe, where first Platonist then later

Aristotelian natural philosophy held sway. But eventually Epicurus found a champion in the sixteenth century French scientist and priest Pierre Gassendi, who defended “Epicurus against his detractors” in his book *On the Life and Morals of Epicurus*. He held on to Epicurus’ atoms while positing God as their creator and mover.<sup>18</sup> Gassendi in turn influenced several “English scientific circles” in terms of various corpuscular theories of matter. In particular, he influenced Dr. Walter Charleton, who took on Epicurus’ physics as his own. The title of his 1654 book summarizes how Charleton understood Epicurus’ impact: *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charletoniana, or A Fabrick of Science Natural, upon a Hypothesis of Atoms, Founded by Epicurus, Repaired by Petrus Gassendus, and Augmented by Walter Charleton*. In short, Epicurus was modified by Gassendi and amplified by Charleton. Four years later Charleton published *Epicurus’ Morals*.

Although there continued to be various theological objections to these theories, the newly chartered Royal Society of England defended Epicurus’ ideas about the most basic parts of physical reality. Leading the defense was Robert Boyle:

The atomical philosophy invented and brought into request by Democritus, Leucippus, Epicurus & their contemporaries . . . in our less partial & more inquisitive times it is so luckily revived & so skillfully celebrated in diverse parts of Europe by the learned pens of Gassendus, Magnenus, Descartes, & his disciples . . . that it is now grown too considerable to be any longer laughed at, & considerable enough to deserve serious inquiry.<sup>19</sup>

Needless to say, Epicurus’ view *did* receive serious inquiry in the following centuries. As any middle school student knows, atoms still play a major role in the drama of physics, chemistry, and biology today.

But Epicurus’ philosophy—his theorizing about how we know things and about the nature of reality—was not just a matter of abstract reasoning for him. Instead, his theoretical inquiries always aimed at practical results. The point: theory existed for practice. This practice and the life it shaped is what most

Epicureans were interested in. Said another way, they were attracted to Epicurus' way of life and path to happiness.

Unlike today, when philosophy can be very dry and very abstract, at times seeming to have extraordinarily little to do with actual life, philosophy in the ancient world was, as Pierre Hadot put it, "a way of life."<sup>20</sup> Although this was true for all the major schools of philosophy, it was particularly true for Epicureanism. We see the point in each of Epicurus' major letters. To Menoeceus, Epicurus explains, "We must practice those things that produce happiness since if happiness is present, we possess everything, and if not, we do everything to acquire it." To Pythocles: "Remember that, like everything else [that is, all other natural philosophy], knowledge of celestial phenomena . . . has no other purpose than tranquility of mind." To Herodotus, he declares, "We must hold that the function of the study of natural phenomena is to clearly understand the cause of the most important things. And we must hold that blessed happiness depends on this."<sup>21</sup>

To the extent that Epicurus was the helper of many (in Greek, his name, *Epikouros*, means "helper" or "ally"), the one who delineated the path to tranquility and the happy life, he was, as Anthony Gottlieb terms him, a "guru" to his followers.<sup>22</sup> For the Greek-writing Roman satirist Lucian of Samosata, "Epicurus was a man truly holy and divine in his nature. He alone truly discerned that which is noble and good and handed them down. He was the liberator of all who associated with him."<sup>23</sup> For the Roman Lucretius,

Epicurus was a god—a god, I say—who first discovered that discipline of life that is now called wisdom, and who, by the science of philosophy, placed human existence from amid great waves of trouble and great darkness of mind into a condition of tranquility and a clear light."<sup>24</sup>

To give one last example, Torquatus—the Roman statesman and orator, and Cicero's spokesman for Epicureanism in his *On the Ends of Good Things and*

*Bad Things*—made the point this way:

In my judgment, Epicurus is the one person who has discerned the truth, liberated the souls of men from the greatest errors, and delivered to men all there is to know about living well and happily. . . . Should we not feel the greatest gratitude to him who clearly heard the voice of nature and grasped its significance so firmly and so fully that he has led all sane-minded men into the path of calm and tranquility—a quiet and happy life?<sup>25</sup>

The same general sentiment was true for all of Epicurus' ancient followers—for Mys, Leontion, Themista, Leonteus, Metrodorus, Hermarchus, Polyaeus, Colotes, Idomeneus, among others in his original circle, as well as for Polystratus, Dionysus, Basilides, Zeno of Sidon, Philodemus of Gadara, Calpurnia (the third wife of Julius Caesar), Plotina (the wife of the emperor Trajan), and for Diogenes of Oenanda later on.<sup>26</sup>

When Epicureanism was revived in Europe and later in the United States, the general emphasis on the good life and happiness was the same. In a letter to Ambrogio Tignosi, the early Italian humanist Cosma Raimondi calls Epicurus "the very wisest of men," further stating that Epicurus "appeared to correct and amend the mistakes of the older philosophers and put forward his own true and certain teachings on happiness."<sup>27</sup> The Englishman Sir William Temple praised the Epicureans for equating happiness with "tranquility of mind." He took Epicurus' advice to withdraw from public life seriously when he retired "to his garden at Moor Park" and wrote *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus*.<sup>28</sup> In America, Thomas Jefferson averred in a letter to William Short that he was an Epicurean. Explaining his choice of philosophy, he judges, "I consider the genuine . . . doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational which Greece and Rome have left us." In the appended "Syllabus of the doctrines of Epicurus," Jefferson states that "happiness is the aim of life" and that "the summum bonum"—the highest good—is "tranquility of mind." Back in England, Epicureanism continued to influence the understanding of the good life through

thinkers and writers such as the Utilitarians Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. One scholar sums up the influence this way: “the Epicurean promotion of happiness as the chief end of living provided support for the Utilitarian movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>29</sup> We can also detect Epicurus’ influence on how to live in such disparate theorists as Karl Marx, Ludwig von Mises, and Ayn Rand.

Of course, not everyone, whether ancient or more modern, agreed with the direction of Epicurus’ epistemology or natural philosophy, or with his description of the good life. Not at all. In fact, as one may well imagine, there has been a good deal of criticism. John M. Rist states that “from ancient times [Epicurus’] philosophy has aroused . . . vehement opposition.”<sup>30</sup> This was true not only for rival schools of philosophy but also for the majority in the Christian tradition beginning with Saint Paul’s encounter with certain Epicureans in Athens.<sup>31</sup> Marianna Shakhnovich explains that “an anti-Epicureanism stance was characteristic of the Christian tradition on the whole, both in Western and the Byzantine patristic literature.”<sup>32</sup>

Some of the earliest criticism came from the Roman statesman and philosopher Cicero. He criticized Epicurus for introducing uncaused effects into his natural philosophy (namely, the infamous *swerve* of the atoms that *just happens*), for being sloppy with terminology and definitions (what, exactly, does Epicurus mean by *pleasure*? he asks), and for teaching that one is to be virtuous for the sake of pleasure (rather than for the sake of virtue itself, as Cicero held). At one point the muddle is simply too much, and so Cicero cries out, “What a mass of fallacies!”<sup>33</sup> The Christian theologian Saint Augustine of Hippo concurred with Cicero’s criticism of the subjugation of virtue to pleasure. In the *City of God*, he explains that Epicurus represents “Pleasure sitting on a royal seat like some luxurious queen. And all the virtues are subjected to her as slaves, watching her every nod so that they may do whatever she commands.”<sup>34</sup> Arguing against Epicurus a few centuries after Cicero, Plutarch wrote a short work called, *That It Is Not Possible to Live Well Following Epicurus*. Though the read is of interest, we

need not go into the details since for Plutarch the title betrays the conclusion. As for Alexander, the second century AD so-called “false prophet,” he believed that Epicurus’ chief teachings deserved to be burned. Lucian of Samosata reports that Alexander torched a copy of Epicurus’ *Principal Teachings* in a bonfire, tossing its ashes into the sea.<sup>35</sup>

The wide-ranging Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus criticized Epicurean epistemology for its inability to get at the being and thus the truth of things.<sup>36</sup> The Platonist-leaning Augustine similarly dismissed Epicurus for identifying the “judging faculty of truth with the senses of the body.” Yet this was Augustine’s general criticism of Epicurus—his materialism that was “enslaved to the body,” that he “conceived only of material origins for all natural phenomena . . . in the atoms, that is, in the smallest of little bodies, indivisible and indiscernible by the senses.” Some materialists, he said, “like the Epicureans, believe that living things could be produced from non-living things.”<sup>37</sup> For Augustine, the very thought was absurd. Therefore, Epicurus’ whole natural philosophy was preposterous.

The early twentieth century idealist philosopher A.E. Taylor censured Epicurus for choosing his atomist explanation of nature to get rid of God. Speculating in his 1911 book *Epicurus*, Taylor asserts that Epicurus banished God not for any legitimate scientific reason but merely because he “dislikes the thought of a God whose judgments may possibly have to be reckoned with hereafter.”<sup>38</sup> Then again, for Epicurus, there was no “hereafter” since he denied the immortality of the soul. This was another problem Augustine had with Epicurus. Epicurus would neither believe “in a life for the soul after death nor in places of recompense.”<sup>39</sup> He wasn’t the only one that judged Epicurus for his failure—or refusal—to believe in the afterlife. In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante situates all Epicureans in the sixth circle of hell for this precise reason. “Within this region is the cemetery of Epicurus and his followers, all those who say the soul dies with the body.”<sup>40</sup>

The greatest problem that Augustine and others, including a long line of Christian fathers and later

Christians, had with Epicurus was his identification—or confusion, they would say—of happiness with pleasure. The second century Clement of Alexandria accused Epicurus of “prefer[ing] pleasure to truth.”<sup>41</sup> Augustine himself stated that “the Epicurean philosophers certainly live in accordance with the flesh since they place the highest good of man in the body’s pleasure”—something that is true for most people, he claimed.<sup>42</sup> The latter judgment was echoed by the twelfth-century bishop John of Salisbury, who mourned that “the world is filled with Epicureans for the simple reason that in its great multitude of men there are few who are not slaves to lust.”<sup>43</sup>

We can learn a great deal from those who criticized Epicurus. But for those who favored him and argued on his behalf, the positives ended up outweighing the negatives. More than that. Many simply shrugged off the criticisms as unfair calumny.

For instance, in his work *Utilitarianism*, John Stuart Mill argued that the various criticisms of Epicurus’ teaching regarding pleasure present it as “a doctrine worthy only of swine, to whom,” he went on to report, “the followers of Epicurus were, at a very early period, contemptuously likened.” In defense of Epicurus and various forms of Epicureanism, Mill countered that “a beast’s pleasures do not satisfy a human being’s conception of happiness.” While Mill conceded that Epicurus could have better expressed himself relative to the nature of and relationship between pleasure,

virtue, and happiness—a criticism earlier levelled by Cicero and Seneca—he nevertheless insisted that “it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.”<sup>44</sup> Presumably, Epicurus would have judged the same. Whatever the case, Mill believed Epicurus was worthy of a closer examination.

This brings us to the final point, the final reason why we should care about Epicurus. We can learn and benefit from him and his philosophy today. This doesn’t mean, of course, that we have to accept everything from Epicurus. But if we pick and choose without expecting to swallow his philosophy whole, understanding, for instance, that virtue has intrinsic value or that science has advanced lightyears since Epicurus first posited his atoms and the void, then perhaps we’ll be able to find something beneficial for our own lives.

We will look more at the contemporary relevance of Epicurus as we go along. For now, let’s give the final words to professor Howard Jones:

As long as individuals are intent on attaining personal happiness, as long as the prospect of death instills fear, as long as there is an urge to escape the demands of a busy world, and as long as there is debate about the origins of the cosmos, it would be surprising if the basic teachings of Epicurus did not still exercise some appeal.<sup>45</sup>

So ends Item 1. See you in **another reading or item**.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Athenaeus of Naucratis, *Deipnosophists* 8.25. The following passages from the same author and work are, in order, 7.8, 7.53, 3.77, 1.9, and 12.7.

<sup>2</sup> Homer, *Odyssey* 9.5-10.

<sup>3</sup> Athenaeus of Naucratis, *Deipnosophists* 12.67. The Christian father Basil of Caesarea had this sort of epicureanism in mind when he advised that “we must minister to the belly with what is necessary—but not with pleasant foods, necessarily, those delicacies sought after by those who look everywhere for table servants and cooks, scouring every land and sea, like those hauling tribute to a harsh master. This is a deplorable business in which one suffers things that are as unbearable as the punishments of Hades, where the inhabitants are forced to card wool into a fire or fetch water in a sieve and pour it into a perforated jar, experiencing never-ending suffering and toil.” See *How to Benefit from Reading Greek Literature* 9.2 in *The Best of Basil the Great on Reading Literature and Education* (Sugar Land: The Classics Cave, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Dane Gordon, “The Philosophy of Epicurus: Is It an Option for Today?”, in *Epicurus: His Continuing Influence and Contemporary*

*Relevance*, ed. Dane R. Gordon & David B. Suits (Rochester: Rochester Institute of Technology, Cary Graphic Arts Press, 2003), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Copleston, *Greece and Rome: From the Pre-Socratics to Plotinus*, vol. 1, *A History of Philosophy* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1946), 408.

<sup>6</sup> For Marcus Aurelius' path and the endowment, see Frank McLynn, *Marcus Aurelius: A Life* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2009), 383-399, and E. Zeller, *A History of Eclecticism in Greek Philosophy* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1883), 191-193. The four schools were the Academy or the Platonist school, the Peripatetic or the Aristotelian school, the Stoic school, and the Epicurean school.

<sup>7</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 10.9 (from here forward, *Lives*).

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Howard Jones, "Epicurus and Epicureanism," in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 321.

<sup>9</sup> Dane Gordon, "The Philosophy of Epicurus: Is It an Option for Today?", in *Epicurus: His Continuing Influence and Contemporary Relevance*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Howard Jones, "Epicurus and Epicureanism," in *The Classical Tradition*, 320.

<sup>11</sup> See Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 5.8-12.

<sup>12</sup> See Paul, Galatians 3.26-28.

<sup>13</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 10.25, 28. See also Cicero's reference to the "bulky volumes to Themista" (*On the Ends of Good Things and Bad Things* 2.67).

<sup>14</sup> For the young, see Andre-Jean Festugiere, *Epicurus and His Gods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 39.

<sup>15</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 10.25.

<sup>16</sup> For John Locke, see Howard Jones, "Epicurus and Epicureanism," in *The Classical Tradition*, 323.

<sup>17</sup> Of course, Epicurus' own atomism was indebted to Democritus of Abdera and Leucippus. Not only that but various strands of Indian philosophy were developing similar atomist theories well before Epicurus. See Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* (New York: Allworth Press, 2002), 317-320.

<sup>18</sup> See Howard Jones, "Epicurus and Epicureanism," in *The Classical Tradition*, 322.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in James Warren, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 266-267.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 10.122, 85, 78.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Gottlieb, *The Dream of Reason: A History of Western Philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 318.

<sup>23</sup> Lucian of Samosata, *Alexander the False Prophet* 61.

<sup>24</sup> Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 5.8-12.

<sup>25</sup> Cicero, *On the Ends of Good Things and Bad Things* 1.14, 71.

<sup>26</sup> For Calpurnia and Plotina, see David Armstrong, "Philodemus, the Herculaneum Papyri, and the Therapy of Fear," in *Epicurus: His Continuing Influence and Contemporary Relevance*, 27.

<sup>27</sup> See "A Letter to Ambrogio Tignosi in Defense of Epicurus against the Stoics, Academics and Peripatetics," trans. Martin Davies, in Martin Davies, "Cosma Raimondi," in *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts*, vol. 1: *Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 238 ff.

<sup>28</sup> See Howard Jones, "Epicurus and Epicureanism," in *The Classical Tradition*, 323.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

<sup>30</sup> J.M. Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), ix.

<sup>31</sup> See Acts 17.16-21.

<sup>32</sup> Marianna Shakhnovich, "Theological Paradox in Epicurus," in *Epicurus: His Continuing Influence and Contemporary Relevance*, 158.

<sup>33</sup> Cicero, *On the Ends of Good Things and Bad Things* 2.31. As for "the swerve," Epicurus (as we know from Lucretius and Cicero) introduced it to explain, among other points, human free will. Rather than merely falling forever, downward and straight, atoms (somehow) minutely swerve so that they introduce indeterminacy into the sum total of things. Again, somehow this leads to human freedom, a reality which Epicurus insisted upon. See Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 2.218-220. For a full discussion of the swerve and its significance, see Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 187-189.



## EPICURUS ▪ INTRODUCTION PART 1 – WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT EPICURUS?

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *City of God* 5.20.

<sup>35</sup> Lucian of Samosata, *Alexander the False Prophet* 47.

<sup>36</sup> See Lloyd P. Gerson, "Plotinus and Epicurean Epistemology," in *Epicurus: His Continuing Influence and Contemporary Relevance*, 69, 72, and 79.

<sup>37</sup> Augustine, *City of God* 8.7 and 8.5.

<sup>38</sup> A.E. Tayler, *Epicurus* (London: Constable & Company, 1911), 52.

<sup>39</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* 6.26.

<sup>40</sup> Dante, *Inferno* 10.13-15 (trans. Allen Mandelbaum).

<sup>41</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 2.4.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *City of God* 14.2.

<sup>43</sup> J.B. Pike, ed., *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938), cited in Karen Bollermann and Cary Nederman, "John of Salisbury," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://secure.plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/john-salisbury/>.

<sup>44</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Howard Jones, "Epicurus and Epicureanism," in *The Classical Tradition*, 323.

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"O Epicurus! You who were first able to raise so bright a light from so great a darkness, shedding light on the blessings of life! . . . For as soon as your system of philosophy that arose in your divine intellect begins to proclaim aloud the nature of things, the terrors of the mind disperse and the walls of the world open wide. . . . You placed human existence from amid great waves of trouble and great darkness of the mind into a condition of tranquility and a clear light. . . . I follow you, the glory of the Greeks!" —Titus Lucretius Carus

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