

The Continuing Challenge of Epicureanism

Epicurus (341-270 BC) was born on the Greek island of Samos. His father was a poor Athenian colonist. Significantly, he was a contemporary of Zeno of Citium (334-262 BC), the founder of Stoicism.

Epicurus began to study philosophy at the age of 14. At the age of 18 he came to Athens for two years of military service as an *epebe*.¹ For a time his family became refugees in Asia Minor and during this time was taught philosophy by a follower of Democritus whom he regarded with contempt.

Epicurus moved to Athens in 306 BC and transferred there the school of philosophy that he had earlier set-up in 311 BC in Mitylene. Indeed, both he and Zeno established their philosophical schools in Athens within a few years of each other. It was in Athens that Epicurus bought a small garden and in it located his philosophical school. He is said to have written 300 books, but only a few writings have survived. One of his books was entitled *On Holiness* and spoke of his philosophical community as “our holy body.”²

Epicurus is variously described as an empiricist and a hedonist. Bertrand Russell’s review of his life sees him as gentle and kindly towards most people, but scathing towards other philosophers, while being guilty also of dictatorial dogmatism. He insisted that his followers “learn a kind of creed embodying his doctrines, which they were not allowed to question.”³

The Relevance of Epicurus to Modern Times

Dante may have consigned Epicurus and his followers to the sixth circle of hell along with heretics⁴, but Epicurus was and continues to be a highly influential philosopher. One of Julius Caesar’s assassins, Cassius, was a follower of Epicurus, as were the poets Horace and Virgil and the Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius. Rome, however, did not normally warm to Epicureanism perhaps because of its political minimalism and the suspicion that Epicureans were ‘atheists’, opposed to Roman gods.⁵ Epicureanism did flourish, however, in Syria and Antiochus IV was converted to Epicureanism.⁶ Epicurean communities were established “in the West, in Herculaneum or Sorrento, in the East, on Rhodes and Cos, in Pergamon, Lycian Oinoanda, Syrian Apameia, in remote southern Lycian Rhodiapolis or in Amastris in Bithynia on the Black Sea.”⁷

Jungkuntz explains how many church fathers found cause to commend Epicurus for certain aspects of his life and doctrine.⁸ To take but one example, Clement commended Epicurus for the coeducation that operated in his school – unique for the time – which stood powerfully illustrate that women are the equal of men, and influenced by the Gospel, just as able to attain that perfection which is the goal of all ‘true knowledge.’⁹ Indeed, more women were associated with Epicurus’ Garden than are recorded for any other school.¹⁰

Utilitarianism is an immensely popular modern philosophy which owes much to the thought of Epicurus. This is the view that life has no higher end than pleasure. Utilitarians believe that actions are right to the extent that they promote happiness and wrong to the extent that they produce the reverse of happiness.¹¹

John Stuart Mill observes that the original followers of Epicurus were likened to pigs for making pleasure their chief end. Similarly, Utilitarians, have sometimes been lampooned for reviving such a doctrine. When Epicureans were called pigs they responded that such an accusation assumed that human beings are not capable of any pleasure other than what pigs can experience. Consequently, it was their accusers who were really guilty of degrading human nature. Indeed, Mill recognises, “...there is no known Epicurean theory of life which does not assign to the pleasure of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation.”¹²

Epicureanism also sits well with modern Western individualism since it is essentially egoistic, since one’s own pleasure is the aim and measure of the good for Epicurus.¹³ Throughout history there have been those who have wrongly assumed that Epicurus and Epicureans gave themselves to self-indulgence and even in modern times this erroneous understanding is perpetuated.¹⁴ However, in reality Epicureans practiced moderation to the point of asceticism. As Nullens and Michener recognise, “In essence he was an enduring hedonist in that he drew attention away from the pursuit of pleasure and toward the avoidance of pain”, giving rise “to a very sober, almost ascetic lifestyle. Prevention was deemed better than cure.”¹⁵

In her book *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* (Oxford University Press), Catherine Wilson points her readers to “the Epicurean flavour of many of the ideas that pervaded seventeenth – and eighteenth- century metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and natural and political philosophy.”¹⁶ She maintains that Descartes, Spinoza and Locke were quasi-Epicureans. In the 17th century it was common to regard Epicurism, as it was called, a corrupting force, ‘dragging men into a condition of degradation and promoting malice and social unrest’, with Richard Braithwaite, for example, blaming Epicurism – the ‘private and peculiar Sect’ – for the “thought that the chief good consisted in a voluptuous and sensual life, expecting no future doom after the term and end of this life.”¹⁷ In more recent times, Karl Marx wrote his doctoral dissertation on Epicurus.

Tom Wright speaks of “the strongly prevailing Epicurean climate of the post-enlightenment world.” He adds, “Lucretius would, I think, be delighted at his late victory, with the gods banished to a distant heaven and the world doing its own thing, developing by its own inner processes.”¹⁸ Wright finds the background to evolution in Enlightenment thought, concluding that Darwin is a product of that era and its Epicureanism. Wright contends that evolution – the world (in separation from God) developing by its own inner processes - is an Epicurean idea, separating the world from God. But Wright is quite prepared to accept that notwithstanding this influence, there may well be nothing wrong with Darwin’s science, which may help explain how God works in the world.

Wright also maintains that Epicurean thought has paved the way for political as well as scientific developments. In explaining just how greatly Epicureanism has impacted the modern Western world Wright comments:

But whereas most westerners today suppose that we have discovered self-perpetuating secular democracy as the ultimate form of government and a self-caused evolution as the ultimate form of the development of life, thus setting ourselves apart from lesser superstitious mortals who still believe otherwise, what has in fact happened is simply the triumph of one ancient worldview at the expense of others.

Indeed, Epicureanism even determines the framework within which our debates take place. Consequently, we accept the terms ‘nature and supernature’, rather than simply speaking of ‘naturalism.’ So debates for causation formulate the question like this: does a supposedly existent God ‘intervene’ in the world or doesn’t he? Wright takes it that this boils down to being the same question as whether the supposedly existent soul causes events in the body or not. When the relationship of God and world, and soul and body, are set in such an Epicurean frame, then we wrongly start to look for a god-of-the-gaps and similarly for a soul-of-the-gaps, “hiding in the bits that neuroscience hasn’t yet managed to explain.” Against this latent Epicurean framework Wright insists:

...in biblical thought heaven and earth – God’s sphere and our sphere – are not thought of as detached or separate. They overlap and interlock. God is always at work in the world, and God is always at work in, and addressing, human beings, not only through one faculty such as the soul or spirit but through every fibre of our beings, not least our bodies. That is why I am not afraid that one day the neuroscientists might come up with a complete account of exactly which neurons fire under which circumstances, including that might indicate the person as responding to God and his love in worship, prayer and adoration. Why should the creator not relate to his creation in a thousand different ways? Why should brain, heart and body not all be wonderfully interrelated in so many ways that we need the rich language of mind, soul and spirit to begin to do justice to it all?

There is another level at which Epicurean thinking shows itself to be integral to our postmodern world. This is the view that people are free to believe whatever they want to believe; that our beliefs are under our control.¹⁹ As we will go on to discover, Epicurus chose to believe about the gods, the nature of the universe, death and the human condition that which would enable him to overcome all those fears that otherwise would stand in the way of attaining the peaceful state of mind he sought. Indeed, as with Epicurus, much of modern *ethical* hedonism is rooted in such *psychological* hedonism.

Slattery relates Epicureanism to modern ethical challenges:

So the philosophy of the garden addresses an urgent ethical question: how do we manage the threat of global warming caused by human over-industrialisation, and the crisis of environmental degradation that ultimately follows? Epicurus answered this question long before it was a question by invoking the idea of natural limits as a guide to action: “He who understands the limits of life knows how easy it is to procure enough to remove the pain of want and make the whole of life complete and perfect,” he wrote. “Hence he has no longer any need of things which are not to be won save by labour and conflict.” Time and again Epicurus and his followers return to the theme of limits: “One must regard wealth beyond what is natural as of no more use than water to a container that is full to overflowing.”²⁰

Is the Pursuit of Pleasure the Ultimate Good?

Epicurus had a negative view of nature, emphasising “the many worthless and harmful creatures it produced and the seeming purposelessness or even injustice of disastrous natural phenomena.”²¹

Epicurus invited his followers to look at animals and newborn babies to see for themselves that “the natural impulse of unsophisticated nature is towards pleasure.”²²

For Epicurus pleasure is the only thing good in itself, but he defined pleasure negatively. For Epicurus the removal of all pain defines the magnitude of pleasure resulting in a state characterised by *ataraxia* (tranquility) and *aponia* (freedom from pain). Yet this is understandable when we appreciate that in the world in which Epicurus lived life expectancy was only around 35 years of age. Further, this was a time when there were no antibiotics and no morphine. People could easily relate to Epicurus’ focus on pain.

For Plato and Aristotle the fundamental constituent of happiness is virtue, excellence of the “soul.” Epicurus observed that others treated non-hedonistic values as the aim of ethics, especially virtue. But he responded that such values, including virtue, are not an essential ingredient of happiness. Virtue is not to be valued for its own sake, but merely as a means to the attainment of happiness. To him the four “moral virtues” of Greek philosophy – prudence, justice, moderation and courage – only have value if they are constituents of our means to attaining pleasure. The virtues are means not ends, though they are necessary if happiness is to be attained.

It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and honourably and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and honourably and justly without living pleasantly. Whenever any one of these is lacking, when, for instance, the man is not able to live wisely, though he lives honourably and justly, it is impossible for him to live a pleasant life (Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*).

So, for example, Epicurus saw justice “as a form of contract between members of a community to ensure that they do not harm or disadvantage one another. Each individual stands to gain from such an arrangement, and therefore it contributes to the pleasure of each.”²³ This was in line with his view that justice “consists in so acting as not to have occasion to fear other men’s resentment.”²⁴

Epicurus believed that people should not feel guilty about wanting to live a happy life. His focus on pleasure shocked many of his contemporaries. As indicated, he insisted that pleasure was the most important thing to strive for in life. Other philosophers have echoed Epicurus’ thought in key respects. So Spinoza defined good as what we perceive as pleasure and bad as that which brings pain. Like Epicurus he recognised that people do experience pleasure in the pleasure of others and ultimately in the well-being of all nature.

As Frame points out, the normal way in which we use the word *pleasure* does not include some things that many value more highly. For example, sacrificing one’s life to save another. Epicurus does not explain why pleasure should be elevated above such values. Of course, some might counter that if someone sacrifices himself for another then it is because this is what brings him pleasure, but clearly, if we stretch the meaning of pleasure to comprehend all valued then the concept of pleasure is evacuated of all meaning.

Epicurus’ materialistic approach to reality leads him to assume that life is just what it is. To his mind it is left to people to make the best fist of living life that they can. Since there is no life after death then one might as well try to be as happy as one can be. But, as Frame recognises, Epicurus gives us no reason as to why we *ought* to value pleasure above all else. Frame comments, “I doubt that

anyone can derive an ethical ought from a materialistic philosophy. Matter in motion simply cannot tell us what we ought to do" (*History*, 59).

Types of Pleasure

Epicurus saw pain as a disturbance of the natural state. He discriminated between two broad types of pleasure, which roughly correspond to the difference between short-term and long-term pleasures:

- Kinetic Pleasure: The process of removing pain which produces pleasurable sensations, e.g. the satiating of hunger.
- Static Pleasure: The state, not process, in which one enjoys complete absence of pain. He called the absence of physical pain *aponia* and the absence of mental pain *atarxia*.

Kinetic pleasures produce static pleasures but static pleasures are greater than kinetic pleasures. Kinetic pleasures are not only physical but also include, for example, holding discussions with friends and solving problems. Epicurus saw that drink, eating good food and sex are sources of pleasure but kinetic pleasures are not to be treated as the goals because they do not constitute a calm and stable disposition of body and mind.²⁵ Indeed, kinetic pleasures may produce greater pain.

No pleasure is a bad thing in itself, but the things which produce certain pleasures entail disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves (Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*).

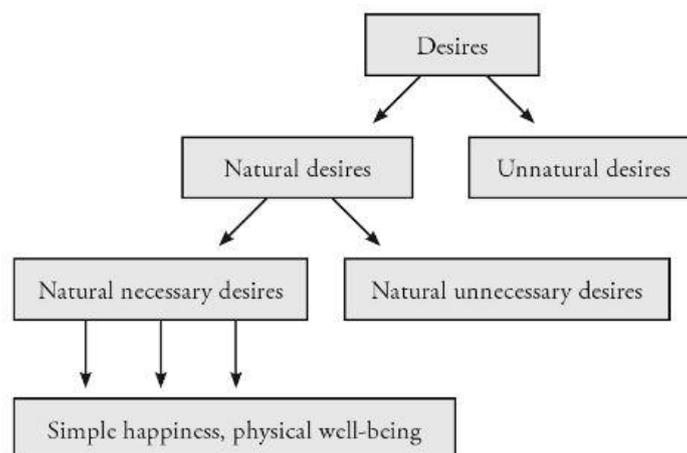
Because it takes time to produce the settled state (static pleasure) promoted by Epicurus, he issues the following exhortation in his *Letter to Menoecus*:

Let no one when young delay to study philosophy, nor when he is old grow weary in the task; for nobody can come too early or too late to secure the health of his soul.²⁶

The Simple Life

Epicurus distinguished three types of desires: (1) those which are both natural and necessary (the need for food, rest and warmth); (2) those which are natural but not necessary (e.g. the desire for delicious food or a comfortable bed or sexual experience); and (3) those which are neither natural nor necessary (e.g. fashionable clothing and the seeking of power and prestige).²⁷ Clement betrayed Epicurus' influence upon him when he commented, "To be clothed is necessary and natural, sexual intercourse is natural but not necessary."²⁸

Nullens and Michener helpfully summarise Epicurus' path to happiness via the following diagram²⁹:



For Epicurus the greatest pain is the mental disturbance especially produced by the loss of friendship but also by false beliefs about the nature of things, about the gods and about the soul's destiny. The goal is to achieve static pleasure, freedom from especially this pain. For Epicurus this requires living a simple life. People will cause themselves unnecessary pain if they seek to satisfy desires by luxurious means "as if they brought freedom from pain and fear".³⁰ So, while natural and necessary desires should be indulged this should usually be done in moderation. "Usually" is the key word here – Epicurean communities occasionally held banquets.³¹ In the case of Epicurus' own community a simple life was perhaps somewhat unavoidable given reliance, at least in part, on voluntary contributions.³² But the Epicurean position was that the person who is "accustomed to the simple life is... perfectly at liberty to enjoy spells of luxury, long or short, should these happen to come along."³³ Indeed, an accurate reading of Epicurus' position is that he did not so much teach that simple pleasures were superior to luxurious ones, but that what is most important is adopting a thoughtful approach to pleasure.³⁴ Understanding this, we need to add nuance to the diagram presented by Nullens and Michener above. For the attainment of "simple happiness, physical well-being" may not, as the diagram would suggest, necessarily require the by-passing of "natural, unnecessary desires."

Epicurus sought to address the so-called "hedonistic paradox" associated with Cyrenaic hedonism. Failure to achieve the pleasure sought brings frustration and realisation of all pleasure sought results in satiation and boredom. Epicurus recognised that the momentary enjoyment of pleasure might have painful consequences. As Sproul puts it:

The Epicureans understood that if you indulged in too much wine the result would not be exquisite enjoyment of fine-tasting wine, but the awful hangover of the next day. Likewise, if you overindulged in sexual activities, the odds were greatly increased that you would add venereal disease to your future misery.³⁵

Epicurus saw prudence as the chief and first source of pleasure, with prudence being that from which the other virtues develop.

When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or wilful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain

in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of revelry, not sexual lust, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul. Of all this the beginning and the greatest good is wisdom. Therefore wisdom is a more precious thing even than philosophy; from it spring all the other virtues, for it teaches that we cannot live pleasantly without living wisely, honourably, and justly; nor live wisely, honourably, and justly without living pleasantly. For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them (Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*).

Epicurus modelled the pursuit of pleasure via living a simple life, choosing to live in basic housing, wearing inexpensive clothes, drinking water rather than wine, avoiding fish because of its expense, and sticking to a rudimentary diet, e.g. bread with olives and vegetables. He was fond of other people's children but considered marriage and children a distraction from more serious pursuits.³⁶ Epicurus' pessimism is evident in his observation that the wailing of a newborn baby is "most appropriate for entrance upon a life that will be filled with trouble."³⁷

At one point he said, "I am thrilled with pleasure in the body when I live on bread and water, and I spit on luxurious pleasures, not for their own sake, but because of the inconveniences that follow them." At another time he wrote to a friend, "Send me some preserved cheese that when I like, I may have a feast."³⁸ He also opined, "Sexual intercourse has never done a man good and he is lucky if it has not harmed him."³⁹ His later follower, Lucretius, modified this view, contending that there is no harm in sexual intercourse provided it involves no passion.⁴⁰

It was Epicurus' contention that we are not very good at knowing what will make us happy. He recognised that often what we want is not in fact what we need. He observed that people often sought to satisfy themselves by pursuing material things which often did not bring them pleasure. Our ignorance concerning our own needs results in us being subject to sometimes manic desires.

Epicurus taught that self-indulgence involves two mistakes: (1) it only iterates or varies pleasure but does not increase it; (2) it increases desires and appetites "thus increasing one's vulnerability to pain by exposure to the vagaries of fortune."⁴¹ Some qualification is needed here, however. For Epicurus' view was that luxury could be welcomed, "just so long as its possession does not detract from the maintenance or attainment of a pain and trouble free state; and it need not do this, he holds, so long as one has the right attitude towards luxury: namely, that it is to be enjoyed if present, but not missed if absent."⁴²

Gregory of Nazianzus declared that Epicurus "gave support to his doctrine by his decent and sober way of life", given that otherwise his promotion of pleasure would have been misunderstood. Ambrose and Jerome also commended Epicurus for his advocacy of temperance.⁴³

The Three Keys to Attaining Pleasure

Epicurus believed that there are only three things which we need: friends, freedom and an analysed life. He also believed that the obstacles to realising durable pleasure could be overcome.

Friendship was very important to Epicurus. For Epicurus friendship was not merely an instrumental good but had intrinsic value, being in itself one of the supreme pleasures.⁴⁴ As indicated earlier, Epicurus had bought a home outside of Athens which he called *The Garden*. He asked a group of friends to move in with him and at meal times they would gather together and talk philosophy. Indeed, when Epicurus taught aristocrats, slaves and women sat together.

Epicurus insisted that all people need to live with friends, that is, with permanent companions. Being with friends was so basic to Epicurus that he recommended that a person should never eat a snack alone. He said that to eat without a friend was but the life of a lion or a wolf.

Of all the means which wisdom acquires to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is friendship (Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*).

Eric Brown defends Epicurus against many criticisms, but he does find one criticism that ‘sticks.’ This is the charge that Epicurus’ egoistic hedonism cannot sustain valuing others for their sake, something essential to genuine friendship.⁴⁵ This is because Epicurus does insist “that one must refer every choice, every aversion, and every action to one’s own pleasure.”⁴⁶ Brown comments:

In sum, on Epicurus’ account, we should seek our friends’ pleasures as much as we seek our own, but we should seek only our own pleasures for their own sake. By this reasoning, we can and should seek friendship ever so much, but not for its own sake. So there is no evidence that Epicurus finds friendship or friends to be valuable for their own sake, no evidence that Epicurus contradicts his fundamental dictum that everything worth choosing is worth choosing for the sake of one’s own pleasure.⁴⁷

The maxim became popular “Act always as if Epicurus is watching.” Epicurus was an inspirational model. He withdrew from civic life though his withdrawal was not complete. Nevertheless, to meet his need for freedom he got his friends to leave Athens with him and start a commune, distancing themselves from the rat race they associated with city life and disengaging themselves from local politics. He urged his young friend and disciple, Pythocles to “flee from every form of culture.”⁴⁸ His maxim, “Live concealed” was affirmed as wise counsel by Basil the Great and Theodoret. Commending Epicurus, Theodoret comments, “So, as I said, I try to escape notice, and more than other men I cherish the life of peaceful seclusion.”⁴⁹

Epicurus reasoned that to the extent that a person achieves political power he increases the number of those who envy him and therefore wish to do him injury. Peace of mind is impossible in this case, even if one succeeds in escaping external misfortune.⁵⁰ In similar vogue, Epicurus showed no interest in science, seeing scientific questions as but matters of idle curiosity. Indeed, he warned against gaining excessively detailed knowledge about phenomena because it might make one more anxious and be opposed to attaining peace of mind. So he said, “when we come to subjects for special inquiry, there is nothing in the knowledge of risings and settings and solstices and eclipses and all kindred subjects that contributes to our happiness.”⁵¹ Thus, Epicurus’ determination to overcome fear was a deterrent to serious and more advanced scientific enquiry.

Epicureans were “without genuine interest in anything outside individual happiness.”⁵² Epicurus reacted against the Platonic view which venerated the city. Against this, he explained civilisation as due to “man’s efforts under nature’s tutelage to escape from fear of harm and the adversities arising

from physical needs.”⁵³ Such examples indicate, as Hospers recognised, that “Epicurean ethics is not so much a formula for achieving pleasure as for avoiding displeasure.”⁵⁴

In their commune Epicurus and his friends were able to live self-sufficient lives.

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 (Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*).

Many communes throughout the civilised world were formed on the Epicurean model.

The cultivation of the analysed life requires the ability to take time for reflection. As one encountered worries such reflection involved analysing one’s life and recognising that if one had friends and freedom and the ability to keep their importance in perspective then one had all one needed to live a pleasurable life.

Epicurus observed that people are often induced to seek other things they want but don’t need and which will not produce pleasure. He also observed that such inducements succeed because they are customarily associated with the things that people do need.

The Causes of Pain

Epicurus aimed at achieving an undisturbed state (*ataraxia*) which could only be realised by freeing people from fear.⁵⁵ The greatest threat to Epicurus’ worldview is fear. He recognised that fear of imaginary ills, possible disasters and death can ruin present pleasure and cause one to live in misery. Russell summarises Epicurus’ philosophy as follows:

Eat little, for fear of indigestion; drink little, for fear of next morning; eschew politics and love and all violently passionate activities; do not give hostages to fortune by marrying and having children; in your mental life, teach yourself to contemplate pleasures rather than pains. Physical pain is certainly a great evil, but if severe, it is brief, and if prolonged, it can be endured by means of mental discipline and the habit of thinking of happy things in spite of it. Above all, live so as to avoid fear.⁵⁶

Taub comments:

It was the elimination of fear and anxiety (particularly about the intervention of the gods in the world) that motivated Epicurus and Lucretius to present their views on cosmology and meteorology, and to argue that ordinary experience is invaluable in helping us to understand the universe as natural.⁵⁷

As Russell observes, “It was through the problem of avoiding fear that Epicurus was led into theoretical philosophy.”⁵⁸ Indeed, Russell concludes that for Epicurus, as for Bentham, the ideal was security, not liberty.⁵⁹ In his quest for the peace and calm of a secure life, Epicurus tackled fears by expressing his view that pain is due to certain mistaken beliefs:

- Beliefs about the gods.

- Beliefs about the destiny of the soul.
- Beliefs about what objects in the world are valuable.

To Epicurus beliefs in the divine management of the cosmos and of human destiny were a major cause of human failure to live a tranquil life. He argued that philosophy has no value unless it helps us attain happiness.

In popular Greek religion a happy man was *eudaimon*, “one who has a favourable deity.” For Epicurus happiness is a life of uninterrupted tranquillity and freedom from pain. He chose to believe this was true of the gods. He considered that the universal beliefs of mankind did establish the fact that the gods exist: “That about which all agree must be true.” On the same basis he believed the gods must be sublimely happy, immortal and of human shape. However, as Warren observes, given that Epicurus believed that all gods are composed of atoms and that “all conglomerations of atoms are merely temporary” and “will eventually disperse to form new conglomerations” it is difficult to understand why he thought of the gods as imperishable.⁶⁰

There is another curious aspect to Epicurus’ theology. Although he thought of the gods as ‘sublimely happy’ it turns out he set a very low bar for divine satisfaction. So on one occasion he claimed, “[I am] ready to rival Zeus for happiness so long as [I have] a barley cake and some water.”⁶¹

In his antipathy to religion and popular conceptions of deity Epicurus was quite exceptional in the ancient world. However, he was not an atheist. Indeed, as Belliotti recognises, “Epicurus...was convinced that the universal belief in the gods could be explained only by their objective reality.”⁶² So Epicurus did not deny the existence of the gods, though he rejected the common view that the celestial bodies were deities.⁶³ He also repeatedly and vociferously rejected the belief that the gods were responsible for natural events. In particular, he denied that there was any reason to fear God. He surmised that the gods were disinterested in a world which is to be explained by atomic phenomena alone. He saw divination and augury as expressions of superstition.⁶⁴ Obviously, if the gods are disinterested in human life then it is an absurd waste of time to try to read their intentions by such practices as studying the entrails of animals.⁶⁵ To Epicurus it was totally implausible that such enormous, unexplainable evil could persist if divine providence ruled, so he concluded divine providence was a myth.⁶⁶ For Epicurus “the most pernicious and dangerous belief about the gods is that they are in the least concerned about our world and its inhabitants.”⁶⁷ He reasoned that no human experience constituted evidence that divine anger or blessing was being expressed. Indeed, he supposed that any such deity must present exactly the kind of model humans should emulate, namely peacefulness, detachment and unending pleasure.⁶⁸ As Belliotti wryly remarks, “The gods, fortuitously, are Epicureans!”⁶⁹ At the back of this, as Russell recognises, is the sense of threat and even terror Epicurus felt at the thought of divine interference with the course of nature.⁷⁰

While Epicureans accept the existence of disinterested and unnecessary gods we find Lactantius summarising the Epicurean argument against the Stoic view of a benevolent and omnipotent god:

Either god (i) wishes to prevent evils and cannot, or (ii) he can and does not want to, or (iii) he neither wants to nor can, or (iv) he both wants to and can. If (i), he is weak, which is impossible for god. If (ii), he is malevolent, which is equally alien to god. If (iii), he is malevolent and weak, so not a god. If (iv) – the only real possibility for a god – then where do evils come from? And why does he not prevent them?⁷¹

Apart from revelation it is difficult to see how human reason can resolve this matter. Biblical revelation does give substantial and solid answers to these closing questions, even if they are not complete.

Lucretius (99-55 BC) “views Epicurus as a philosophical freedom fighter who has turned religion on its head so as to exalt man.”⁷² He wrote about Epicurus’ defiance of deity and religion:

When prostrate upon earth lay human life
 Visibly trampled down and foully crushed
 Beneath Religion’s cruelty, who meanwhile
 Out of the regions of the heavens above
 Showed forth her face, lowering on mortal men
 With horrible aspect, first did a man of Greece
 Dare to lift up his mortal eyes against her;
 The first he was to stand up and defy her.
 Him neither stories of the gods, nor lightnings,
 Nor heaven with muttering menaces could quell,
 But all the more did they arouse his soul’s
 Keen valour, till he longed to be first
 To break through the fast-bolted doors of Nature....
 Therefore now has Religion been cast down
 Beneath men’s feet, and trampled on in turn;
 Ourselves heaven-high his victory exalts.⁷³

Epicurus also denied the survival of the personality in any form after death and felt by this he would eliminate fear of divine judgment and eternal punishment.⁷⁴

Death is nothing to us; for that which has been dissolved into its elements experiences no sensations, and that which has no sensation is nothing to us (Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*).

Accustom yourself to believing that death is nothing to us, for good and evil imply the capacity for sensation, and death is the privation of all sentience; therefore a correct understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not by adding to life a limitless time, but by taking away the yearning after immortality. For life has no terrors for him who has thoroughly understood that there are no terrors for him in ceasing to live. Foolish, therefore, is the man who says that he fears death, not because it will pain when it comes, but because it pains in the prospect. Whatever causes no annoyance when it is present, causes only a groundless pain in the expectation. Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not. It is nothing, then, either to the living or to the dead, for with the living it is not and the dead exist no longer (Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*).

Epicurus believed there was a complete and permanent loss of consciousness at death and he argued the soul cannot exist independently of the body. He believed a living being was a union of body and soul. But he believed the soul was composed of atoms that were small and round. He insisted the soul must be contained in the body. As he himself said:

The psyche is a fine-structured body diffused throughout the whole aggregate (sc. the rest of the body)... the psyche has the major share of responsibility for sensation... it would not be in possession of this if it were not contained in some way by the rest of the aggregate.⁷⁵

Augustine once commented:

Talking to my friends Alypius and Nebridius, I declared that in my heart I would have had to hand the palm to Epicurus, when it came to matters of the greatest good and the greatest evil, but for my own belief in the eternal life of the soul after death and in the continuing rewards of merit and demerit, in which Epicurus simply did not want to believe.⁷⁶

The Christian conviction that there is indeed life after death is based on the claim that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead in history (see especially 1 Corinthians 15) and that there is strong historical evidence in support of this contention. However deluded Epicurus was in his view of death, we have to acknowledge that he was no hypocrite. He was so deeply persuaded as to his personal convictions that, just a few days before his death, he wrote:

On this truly happy day of my life, as I am at the point of death, I write this to you. The diseases in my bladder and stomach are pursuing their course, lacking nothing of their usual severity: but against all this is the joy in my heart at the recollection of my conversations with you."⁷⁷

Materialism

Empedocles (5th century BC) and Anaxagoras (500-428) were qualitative atomists, believing the world is made up of unchanging elements with different qualities and that reality changes according to the varying combinations of these elements. Epicurus, like Leucippus (5th century) and Democritus (460-360), was a quantitative atomist, believing that reality was made up entirely of atoms (or elements) and empty space. Later atomists include Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and Bertrand Russell (1872-1970). Russell and the early Wittgenstein saw the world as made up of atomic facts not things (contra Aristotle)⁷⁸, whereas Whitehead spoke in terms of atomic processes.

Epicurean physics rested on the thesis that "all bodies are either indivisible small bodies or else are composed of indivisible small bodies", hence 'atoms' since the Greek word *atomos* means 'indivisible, what cannot be divided.'⁷⁹

Whereas Democritus thought that it was the size and shape of atoms that differentiated between them, Epicurus believed they essentially varied according to weight. Their weight caused them to 'fall', though normally in parallel with each other. Significantly, atoms were thought to move in the void at an equal speed, notwithstanding differences in weight, since nothing impedes them.⁸⁰ But without anything or anyone causing them to do so, atoms sometimes 'swerved' from their vertical path and collided, resulting in sideways or upwards motion⁸¹ and thus forming objects. Since reality was solely composed of atoms, their composites and the void, empty space, it followed that atoms must move constantly and endlessly.⁸² Taub believes that Epicurus' atomic beliefs strongly indicate a 'flat Earth' view.⁸³

Many proponents of biological evolution, though not all, are materialists. In the past it was common to assume that societies developed in an analogous manner, hence the proliferation of versions of cultural evolution that are now usually dismissed as unscientific. More lately, Dawkins' materialism leads him, using his spurious concept of 'the selfish gene', to move from biological evolution to a dubious theory of religious development. In many respects such crass examples of misapplied materialism from the physical to the social plane are but fresh instances of how Epicurus himself reasoned. For he believed that the swerve of atoms also explained why it is that people sometimes behave – or so he thought – in a completely uncaused and therefore inexplicable manner. Here, like Democritus, Epicurus thought of the soul as also composed of atoms distributed through the body. Epicurus' justification for his view of death is based on his erroneous belief that at death "the soul is dispersed, and its atoms, which of course survive, are no longer capable of sensation, because they are no longer connected with the body."⁸⁴

Epicurus not only believed that souls were made of atoms. He believed that the gods also were composed of atoms. For Epicurus atoms cannot be split into smaller bodies. The Epicurean Lucretius argues towards the atomist thesis by presupposing like Epicurus himself "Something can be created from nothing is impossible." Epicurus also assumed "Nothing can be destroyed into nothing" and that "The universe never was nor will be in a condition which differs from its present one."⁸⁵

Grayling likes to think of Epicurus as one who believed the world was completely controlled by the laws of nature, but it can be seen from what has just been said that this was not in fact the case.⁸⁶ As Alasdair MacIntyre remarks, "The atomism which Epicurus inherits from Democritus and bequeaths to Lucretius is a theory of blind physical determinism."⁸⁷

Freedom

Epicureans believed the universe was infinite and everlasting⁸⁸ and that there are many worlds like our own that are generated and destroyed by the motions of atoms.⁸⁹ They do not find evidence that our world is the product of rational design. Consequently, people are free to live as they please, pursuing whatever they conceive to be in their best interests.⁹⁰

For Epicurus the freedom of the will was central to his ethics. He believed strongly in causal indeterminacy⁹¹, because of his belief in swerving atoms. Remembering too that Epicureanism is thoroughly empiricist it is striking to note Lucretius' syllogism:

1. If atoms did not swerve, there would not be 'free volition.'
2. There is free volition (this is based on the claim that this can be observed, namely that animals act freely).
3. Therefore, atoms swerve.⁹²

This has profound implications for his understanding of moral responsibility.⁹³ Epicurus was probably the first philosopher to make causal indeterminacy the foundation of moral responsibility. Such libertarian or incompatibilist views are shared by those who explain abnormal or anti-social behaviour as due to a chemical imbalance in the brain. Obviously, in neither case are we really talking about something entirely uncaused since both chemical imbalance and the swerving of atoms

are causes. But for Epicurus the swerve itself is entirely uncaused, just as a person may have no control whatsoever over a chemical imbalance occurring in his brain.

The Epicurean view of free will has some subtleties. It is understood, for example, that it is not identical with what may be described as ‘effective agency.’ Many animals possess effective agency which do not have free will. An animal or person may exercise effective agency while being incapable of doing anything other than what one does. So the man caught in a current is not concerned with *whether or not* to swim for shore. Such effective agency is an exercise of volition without which we would be utterly helpless.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Epicurean freedom of will is so profound that people have the inherent right to choose what they want to believe and to live accordingly.⁹⁵

Still, as Frame, points out, the Epicurean view of free will makes it difficult to make people responsible for the consequence of their actions:

If I walk down the street and some atoms in my head swerve and collide, making me rob a bank, why am I to blame? I didn’t make them swerve; indeed, the swerve had no cause at all. It seems more plausible to say that the swerve happened to me, and therefore that I am not responsible for its consequences (*History*, 59).⁹⁶

Frame argues that libertarian freedom, with Epicurus as a major influence, was the chief view of human freedom held by the church fathers (e.g. Justin Martyr and Tertullian), by Pelagius, the Jesuit Luis Molina, Fausto and Lelio Socinus, Jacob Arminius, present-day Arminians, open theists, process theologians. It is also the view held by the influential Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga.⁹⁷ This was the view that “our free choices are absolutely undetermined and uncaused. They are not foreordained by God, or by circumstances, or even by our own character or desires.” This was rejected at the Reformation by Luther, Calvin and Calvin’s successors.⁹⁸ Grayling expresses the typical libertarian view: “Only if we are genuinely the authors of our choices and actions can we be regarded as moral beings.”⁹⁹

Epicureanism illustrates how libertarian freedom is intensely humanistic because at the centre of its ethics is “limiting one’s desires in order to attain self-sufficiency.” As O’Keefe expresses it: “The greatest fruit of self-sufficiency is freedom, freedom from being dependent on whims of chance to fulfil our desires. Such a dependency would make us vulnerable and hence fearful.”¹⁰⁰

Empiricism

The foundation of Epicurus’ philosophy is sensations or sense-perceptions. As Jungkuntz observes, “Upon their reliability rested for him the entire possibility of knowledge and action.”¹⁰¹ Among ancient philosophers Epicurus is unique in asserting that all perceptions are true.¹⁰² Lucretius argued that “just as a building will collapse if the initial measuring rod is crooked, so reason will collapse if it starts out with false perceptions.”¹⁰³

When the senses are deceived this is not due to the senses per se but to the erroneous opinion formed in the mind, a view supported by Tertullian. In the case of the oar appearing to be bent or

broken in the water the senses themselves are not deceived. Rather, the water itself is responsible for the illusion.¹⁰⁴

Frame explains: “Actual objects generate matching sensations with atoms thrown off by such objects entering the person experiencing sensations, which Epicurus called “effluences.” These effluences created sense-impressions which in turn lead to preconceptions from which develop judgments and language.

Epicurus was misled by his confidence in the clarity of sense-impressions by supposing the sun to be the same size as it was seen to be. In this he influenced Theophilus.¹⁰⁵ For Epicurus it was an axiom that clear sense-impressions generate accurate information about the external appearance and properties of objects.

Another Epicurean axiom was that of non-contradiction: Judgments about non-evident objects are true if consistent with clear sense-impressions. If there is more than one explanation of non-evident phenomena and these are consistent with observation then all such explanations are to be treated as equally valid.

Epicurus assumes, like all scientists, “that there are certain uniformities in nature which hold for what is evident and non-evident alike.”¹⁰⁶ “Deductive reasoning by itself can never be sufficient to establish a scientific statement.”

But Epicurus also believed that preconceptions, what he called *prolepseis*, also served as a criterion of truth. For example, it is because we know beforehand the shape of both a horse and a cow that we are able to identify that thing we see in the distance as either a horse or a cow.¹⁰⁷ By this he means a kind of direct intuition which, while independent of ordinary sense-perception, is ultimately, like all knowledge, derived from sensations.¹⁰⁸ Significantly, Clement saw here support for his view that faith is necessary before there can be any investigation or discussion regarding God:

Even Epicurus, who above all preferred pleasure to truth, takes faith to be a mental preconception; and preconception he reckons to be an apprehension of something distinct and of the distinct notion of the thing; and he holds that without preconception no one can make an inquiry, or be in doubt, or form an opinion, or even argue.¹⁰⁹

Epicurus made much of the power of memory in defending his thoroughgoing empiricism: “all preconceptions, even the most complex, are a record of appearances from the outside, free of any added element of interpretation.”¹¹⁰ He believed that

the mind remembers not must many similarities of the same type, but complex relationships of similarity and difference; and this awareness results in the formation of a single concept. For example, the many memories a person has of Socrates, Plato and others, all having the same animated shape, result in a single memory, or preconception, of a human being as an animated shape. Likewise, the conception of a human being as a rational living being is an empirical judgment, consisting of a memory of many living beings whose behaviour is observably rational, by contrast with the behaviour of other living beings.¹¹¹

Belliotti explains why it is unacceptable to assume, as Epicurus did, that the sensations of pleasure and pain define what is good and bad for us:

We are sometimes harmed by events because they violate our rights or transgress against our just entitlements. But such events – that do not cause us pain and suffering – do not necessarily hurt us if we are unaware of them. What we do not know may not hurt us, but it can still harm us. For example, if someone tells malicious lies about me to a third party behind my back, the lies may harm my reputation but I may never discover the betrayal. I am harmed because my interest in maintaining my deserved, high reputation is transgressed upon, but I am not hurt by the lies because I am unaware of them and thus I am not pained by them. The hedonistic assumption, then, defines good and bad too narrowly. Even if death does not hurt us from an Epicurean perspective, it may well harm us. Death often harms because it deprives us of the ongoing good that was our life.¹¹²

Rationalism and Irrationalism

At one level Epicurus is highly rational in this approach to understanding reality. He uses his reason to reduce reality to its smallest components and to analyse the human condition. He uses his reason in seeking to understand the basis of pleasure and happiness and to advise others on how to live that achieves the desired goal. Further, as Slattery appreciates, Epicurus “understood pleasure not as the fulfilment of desire so much as its rational mastery.”¹¹³ But, at another level, Epicurus is highly irrational because he leaves little if any reason for trusting our minds, while his materialism is also unable to account for human responsibility and moral obligation.

Hospers makes a penetrating observation:

Even though Epicureanism claims to be a long-term egoism (acting in accordance with a long-range plan for the conduct of one’s life), one could question whether the Epicurean is not a short-sighted egoist. He plans long-range, but he is so afraid to get involved in things not within his control that he needlessly sacrifices many experiences that would afford him his greatest satisfaction if only he permitted himself to have them.¹¹⁴

A Missionary Philosophy

A.A. Long describes Epicureanism as “the only missionary philosophy produced by the Greeks.” Diogenes of Oenoanda in Lycia (now SW Turkey), a very wealthy follower of Epicurus, certainly had this mindset. In the 120s AD he installed a wall or stoa near the market place of Oenoanda on which he attempted to inscribe in red paint all of Epicurus’ philosophy so that all the world could learn from it. Diogenes said that if there had been only one or two people he would teach them personally but because there were so many he would display Epicurus’ philosophy in a public manner. It was Diogenes’ view that in order to live by a philosophy it is not sufficient to read it over just once or twice. Rather one needs to be continually reminded – another advantage of using the stoa in this way.

Abbreviation

CCE: *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* (ed. James Warren; Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Bibliography

Asmis, Elizabeth., "Epicurean empiricism" in *CCE*, 84-104

Belliotti, Raymond Angelo., *Roman Philosophy and the Good Life* (Lexington Books, 2009)

Botton, Alain de., YouTube presentations: *Epicurus on Happiness* (3 parts)

Brown, Eric., "Politics and society" in *CCE*, 179-196.

Clay, Diskin., "The Athenian Garden" in *CCE*, 9-28

Dougall, Brian., "Epicureanism: The Hobo Test" in *Philosophy Now* 98 (Sept/Oct 2013).
https://philosophynow.org/issues/98/Epicureanism_The_Hobo_Test Viewed 4/1/17.

Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*: <http://www.epicurus.net/en/menoceus.html>

Erler, Michael, "Epicureanism in the Roman Empire" in *CCE*, 46-64

Frame, John M., *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg/New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2015)

Gill, Christopher., "Psychology" in *CCE*, 125-141

Grayling, A.C., *What is Good? The Search for the Best Way to Live* (London: Orion Books, 2007)

Hitchens, Christopher., *God is Not Great. How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York/Boston: Twelve, 2007)

Hospers, John., *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967)

Jungkuntz, Richard P., "Christian Approval of Epicureanism" in *Church History* (September 1, 1962) 279-293

Long, A.A., *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (University of California Press, 1986)

MacIntyre, Alasdair., *A Short History of Ethics. A history of moral philosophy from the Homeric age to the twentieth century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967)

Mill, John Stuart., "Higher and Lower Pleasures" in *Philosophy: Basic Readings* (ed. Nigel Warburton; London: Routledge, 1999)

Morel, Pierre-Marie., "Epicurean atomism" in *CCE*, 65-83

Nullens, Patrick & Michener, Ronald T., *The Matrix of Christian Ethics: Integrating Philosophy and Moral Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Biblica, 2010)

O'Keefe, Tim., "Action and Responsibility" in *CCE*, 142-157

Principal Doctrines (quotes from the writings of Epicurus):

<http://www.epicurus.net/en/principal.html>

Russell, Bertrand., *History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1946)

Sedley, David., "Epicureanism in the Roman Republic" in *CCE*, 29-45.

Slattery, Luke., "Epicurus for Today" in *Philosophy Now* 117.

https://philosophynow.org/issues/117/Epicurus_For_Today Viewed 4/1/17.

Sproul, R.C.,

Lifeviews. Make a Christian Impact on Culture and Society (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1986);

Thinking Deeply in the Ocean of Revelation: The Bible and the Life of the Mind. Desiring God 2010 National Conference. <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/thinking-deeply-in-the-ocean-of-revelation-the-bible-and-the-life-of-the-mind>

Taub, Liba., "Cosmology and meteorology" in *CCE*, 105-124

Waldow, Anik., "Review of Wilson, Catherine. *Epicureanism at the origins of modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79/4 (2011) 1104-1107.

Warren, James,

"Introduction" in *CCE*, 1-8

"Removing Fear" in *CCE*, 239.

Wilson, Catherine., "Epicureanism in early modern philosophy" in *CCE*, 266-286

Woolf, Raphael "Pleasure and desire" in *CCE*, 158-178.

Younis, Ray., University of Sydney, Seminar on Hedonism

¹ Diskin Clay, "The Athenian Garden" in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* (ed. James Warren; Cambridge University Press, 2009) 11.

² Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1946) 268.

³ Russell, 265-266.

-
- ⁴ A.C. Grayling, *What is Good? The Search for the Best Way to Live* (London: Orion Books, 2007) 124; Erler, 64.
- ⁵ David Sedley, "Epicureanism in the Roman Republic" in *CCE*, 30. Michael Erler also sees the alleged atheism of Epicurean doctrines as being a reason for the growing neglect of Epicureanism in the Roman world. He observes that while Hellenistic philosophy was favourably viewed in Rome throughout the first two centuries down to the time of Marcus Aurelius, Epicurus' teachings stayed in the background in comparison with Stoicism. "Epicureanism in the Roman Empire" in *CCE*, 46.
- ⁶ Sedley, 31.
- ⁷ Erler, 48.
- ⁸ Richard P. Jungkuntz, "Christian Approval of Epicureanism" in *Church History* (September 1, 1962) 279-293.
- ⁹ Jungkuntz, 283.
- ¹⁰ Clay, 26.
- ¹¹ John Stuart Mill, "Higher and Lower Pleasures" in *Philosophy: Basic Readings* (ed. Nigel Warburton; London: Routledge, 1999) 99.
- ¹² "Higher and Lower Pleasures", 100.
- ¹³ Grayling, *What is Good?* 47.
- ¹⁴ It is surprising to see this misunderstanding aired by R.C. Sproul. See "Thinking Deeply in the Ocean of Revelation: The Bible and the Life of the Mind." Desiring God 2010 National Conference. <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/thinking-deeply-in-the-ocean-of-revelation-the-bible-and-the-life-of-the-mind>
- ¹⁵ Patrick Nullens & Ronald T. Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics: Integrating Philosophy and Moral Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Biblica, 2010) 72.
- ¹⁶ Anik Waldow, "Review of Wilson, Catherine. Epicureanism at the origins of modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79/4 (2011) 1104.
- ¹⁷ Catherine Wilson, "Epicureanism in early modern philosophy" in *CCE*, 268.
- ¹⁸ *Mind, Spirit, Soul and Body: All for One and One for All Reflections on Paul's Anthropology in his Complex Contexts* (March 18; Society of Christian Philosophers: Regional Meeting, Fordham University). <http://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/mind-spirit-soul-and-body/> Viewed 2/1/17.
- ¹⁹ Tim O'Keefe, "Action and Responsibility" in *CCE*, 149.
- ²⁰ Luke Slattery, "Epicurus for Today" in *Philosophy Now* 117. https://philosophynow.org/issues/117/Epicurus_For_Today Viewed 4/1/17.
- ²¹ Jungkuntz, 286.
- ²² Grayling, 53. Grayling goes on to note that the Stoics drew different conclusions from the same observations, namely the drive for self-preservation.
- ²³ Grayling, 48.
- ²⁴ Russell, 266.
- ²⁵ A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (University of California Press, 1986) 66.
- ²⁶ Cited by Grayling, 44.
- ²⁷ Nullens & Michener, 72; Jungkuntz, 288.
- ²⁸ Jungkuntz, 289.
- ²⁹ *The Matrix*, 73.
- ³⁰ Raphael Woolf, "Pleasure and desire" in *CCE*, 165.
- ³¹ Grayling, 47.
- ³² Russell, 265.
- ³³ Woolf, 163.
- ³⁴ Woolf, 165.
- ³⁵ R.C. Sproul, *Lifeviews. Make a Christian Impact on Culture and Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1986) 131.
- ³⁶ Russell, 268.
- ³⁷ Jungkuntz, 285.
- ³⁸ Russell, 265.
- ³⁹ Russell, 268.
- ⁴⁰ Russell, 268.
- ⁴¹ Grayling, 46.
- ⁴² Woolf, 160.
- ⁴³ Jungkuntz, 282.
- ⁴⁴ Grayling, 48.
- ⁴⁵ "Politics and society" in *CCE*, 187.

-
- ⁴⁶ Brown, 187-188.
- ⁴⁷ "Politics", 189.
- ⁴⁸ Russell, 267.
- ⁴⁹ Cited by Jungkuntz, 283.
- ⁵⁰ Russell, 267.
- ⁵¹ Cited by Liba Taub, "Cosmology and meteorology" in *CCE*, 109.
- ⁵² Russell, 270.
- ⁵³ Jungkuntz, 284.
- ⁵⁴ John Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967) 601. Similarly, Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics. A history of moral philosophy from the Homeric age to the twentieth century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967) 108.
- ⁵⁵ Taub, 105.
- ⁵⁶ Russell, 268-269.
- ⁵⁷ Taub, 124.
- ⁵⁸ Russell, 269.
- ⁵⁹ *History*, 803.
- ⁶⁰ James Warren, "Removing Fear" in *CCE*, 239.
- ⁶¹ Cited by Brian Dougall, "Epicureanism: The Hobo Test" in *Philosophy Now* 98 (Sept/Oct 2013). https://philosophynow.org/issues/98/Epicureanism_The_Hobo_Test Viewed 4/1/17.
- ⁶² Raymond Angelo Belliotti, *Roman Philosophy and the Good Life* (Lexington Books, 2009) 100. In his Letter to Menoeceus Epicurus demands that one must think of god just as is shown by the 'common notion': "for gods exist; for knowledge of them is evident." Cited by Elizabeth Asmis, "Epicurean empiricism" in *CCE*, 91.
- ⁶³ Belliotti, 100.
- ⁶⁴ Russell, 270.
- ⁶⁵ Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great. How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York/Boston: Twelve, 2007) 258.
- ⁶⁶ Belliotti, 100.
- ⁶⁷ Warren, "Removing Fear," 239.
- ⁶⁸ Compare Grayling, 45.
- ⁶⁹ *Roman Philosophy*, 100.
- ⁷⁰ Russell, 269.
- ⁷¹ Warren, "Removing Fear", 240.
- ⁷² Slattery, "Epicurus for Today."
- ⁷³ Excerpt from *On the Nature of Things* cited by Russell, 271.
- ⁷⁴ See Grayling, 45.
- ⁷⁵ Cited by Christopher Gill, "Psychology" in *CCE*, 126.
- ⁷⁶ Cited by Erler, 63.
- ⁷⁷ Russell, 265.
- ⁷⁸ As Frame explains, "Let's say that you were asked to list all the components in the world, and you began listing things: *the car, the house, the planet, Bill, Jane*. Even if you could list all the things in the world, that list would be incomplete. For the *components* of the world include not only the things, but also the properties of the things (red, blue, large, talented), and the relationships between the things (Bill is in the car, Jane is sitting to the right of Bill)" (*History*, 465). Atomic facts "are the fundamental facts of which all other facts are composed" (*History*, 466), though they have never been identified and presumably never will be. They are evidently a chimera. When essences and substances are denied the whole of reality is trapped in a labyrinth of word games and is eaten up!
- ⁷⁹ Pierre-Marie Morel, "Epicurean atomism" in *CCE*, 65.
- ⁸⁰ Morel, 75.
- ⁸¹ Taub, 113.
- ⁸² Morel, 66.
- ⁸³ "Cosmology", 115.
- ⁸⁴ Russell, 269-270.
- ⁸⁵ Long, 31.
- ⁸⁶ See Russell, 269.
- ⁸⁷ *A Short History*, 107.
- ⁸⁸ Morel, 66.

⁸⁹ Clay, 15. In his *Letter to Herodotus*, he writes: "it is not possible that the atoms I have just described, out of which a world might arise, or by which a world might be formed, should be exhausted in just one or in a limited number of worlds." Cited by Morel, 81.

⁹⁰ Warren, "Introduction" in *CCE*, 5.

⁹¹ O'Keefe, 142.

⁹² O'Keefe, 143.

⁹³ Morel comments that the theory of atomic swerve "also has an ethical dimension, to the extent that in Lucretius as in Diogenes of Oinoanda, it grounds the possibility of free or deliberate action", 76.

⁹⁴ O'Keefe, 144-145.

⁹⁵ See O'Keefe, 150.

⁹⁶ *History*, 59.

⁹⁷ *History*, 605.

⁹⁸ See *History*, 451.

⁹⁹ "What is Good?", 48.

¹⁰⁰ "Action", 148-149.

¹⁰¹ Jungkuntz, 279.

¹⁰² Asmis, 84.

¹⁰³ Asmis, 84. Indeed, Epicurus wrote a book titled *Kanon* ("straight rod"; "measuring stick") in which his views on perception were expressed.

¹⁰⁴ Jungkuntz, 279.

¹⁰⁵ See Jungkuntz, 286.

¹⁰⁶ Long, 28.

¹⁰⁷ Asmis, 86.

¹⁰⁸ Jungkuntz, 280.

¹⁰⁹ Cited by Jungkuntz, 280.

¹¹⁰ Asmis, 90.

¹¹¹ Asmis, 89-90.

¹¹² *Roman Philosophy*, 116.

¹¹³ Slattery, "Epicurus for Today."

¹¹⁴ *Introduction*, 601-602.