

An
Epicurean Gathering



Cambridge
2016

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¶ *The Convenor begins by saying:*

Welcome. Your time will be pleasant here.

¶ *Those gathered respond by saying together:*

**Here the highest good is pleasure which we
seek through remembering and practising the
four truths Epicurus taught us:**

**Don't fear god,
Don't worry about death;
What is good is easy to get, and
What is terrible is easily to endure.ⁱ**

¶ *Lighting a candle the Convenor and those gathered continue with some words from Book III of Lucretius' "De Rerum Natura":*

In the murk of our darkness,
**you, Epicurus, raised your blazing lantern to
show us the blessings of life.**

And we follow you,
**walking with confident footsteps the trails you
have blazed,**

not to be your rival,
**but in admiration and love, and happy to have
your example to guide us. [. . .]**

We begin to follow your thoughts, your arguments, and your reasons, and our mind's terrors abate, while the opaque walls of the world open wide to exhibit intricate actions and movements

**that go on all the time throughout the limitless
void.ⁱⁱ**

Epicurus taught that all our fears and terrors, all the darkness of our mind, would be dispelled, ‘not by the sun’s light of its rays’ shafts, but by careful observation and understanding of inner laws of how nature works’ⁱⁱⁱ and that true piety is ‘to live with a tranquil mind surveying whatever one sees with a steady, clear-eyed acceptance.’^{iv}

With these things in mind we gather together as friends to eat, to drink, to talk and reflect^v.

¶ *With the following words from the opening of Epicurus’ “Letter to Menoeceus” someone introduces a reading from the works of Epicurus, Lucretius or any other author who encourages the leading of an Epicurean life:*

Let no one hesitate to study philosophy while young, and let no one tire of it when old, for it is never too soon nor too late to devote oneself to the well-being of the soul. Whoever says that the time for philosophy has not yet come or that it has already passed is saying that it is too soon or too late for happiness. Therefore both the young and the old should study philosophy so that, while old, we may still be young with all the joy we have gathered from the past; and while young, we may at the same time be old through fearlessness of the future.

¶ *A reading followed by a time of conversation and the sharing of food and drink.*

¶ *Following the conversation the Convenor calls for a short moment of silence after which they conclude the gathering with words taken from Epicurus’ letter to Menoeceus:*

Practise these teachings daily and nightly; study them on your own or in the company of a like-minded friend and you shall not be disturbed while awake or asleep. You shall live like a god among humankind, because one who lives among immortal goods is in no respect like a mere mortal being.

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ⁱ Philodemus, Herculaneum Papyrus, 1005, 4.9-14

ⁱⁱ From DRN Book 3 trans. Slavitt, pp. 95-96

ⁱⁱⁱ *Naturae species ratioque* – the outward face and inner-workings of nature.

^{iv} From DRN Book 5 trans. Slavitt, pp. 237-238

^v One must attend [says Epicurus] to one's present feelings and sense-perceptions, to the common sense-perceptions for individual properties, and to every immediately clear fact as revealed by each of the criteria. (DL 10.82).