

# New Religious Landscape Study from Pew Research

Post by "Don" of March 1, 2025 at 11:09 PM

## [Quote from Titus](#)

I speak from a perspective of Epicurean "universalism". 😊

I would argue that even if they say they pursue the afterlife and are not seeking pleasure they are lying or not recognising their reality. It's as obvious as water is wet and the sunlight at noon is bright to me.

I agree with you, that the stories may misguide them but on the other hand the force of our innate pleasure-pain-mechanism is immensely powerful. No-one can escape this reality.

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

I think some of this discussion revolves around the issue of "psychological hedonism" and I will be the first to admit that I have never found "psychological hedonism" to be a very helpful way to analyze things.

Saying that "You're doing what you're doing - whatever you're doing - because you think it will bring you pleasure" does not seem to me to be a very helpful way of looking at much of anything. I realize that many people that this helps them defend "hedonism," and if so than I suppose whatever floats one's boat is good.

But to me, it's an argument that smacks of circularity and even disrespect for the other person who is earnestly suggesting that whatever they are pursuing is not pleasure at all.

I'm all for a very wide perspective on what the word "pleasure" includes, but once you've come to the place in a discussion where you disagree with someone on their definition, it doesn't seem to me that anything helpful is achieved by saying "you really agree with and you're just not willing to admit it."

I'm going to go on record to say that I lean heavily toward what [Titus](#) wrote. From my perspective, Epicurus was not positing a philosophical position in that "pleasure is the telos." He was identifying a universal trait of human beings - in fact, a trait of all living beings.

I sincerely don't care if Epicureanism is defined as "psychological hedonism" or Axiological hedonism or Ethical hedonism or whatever-ical hedonism or hedonism at all. Epicurus had an insight into the motivation of all living beings that they move toward pleasure and move away

from pain, and he used this starting point to shed light on how living beings interact with their world and ultimately what is the goal of life of living beings, with humans being able to take that information and to move toward eudaimonia.

The meaning of the telos or the "supreme good" is that thing which is the telos or the "supreme good" is that for which ALL actions are ultimately motivated by. One may say virtue is their ultimate motivating factor, but why? Keep asking why? And it is going to be that it gives them a sense of satisfaction that they're doing what's right. And what is a sense of satisfaction? It is pleasure. One can dress up their motivation and their rationalizations and their justifications. They move toward the supreme good which is pleasure.

People lie all the time to themselves to get through the day and through their life. People can convince themselves of almost anything!

I am not saying we MUST convince everyone we come in contact with that "Pleasure is the supreme good and why you do what you." We pick our battles. But the more I look at the world and how people act, I can see them trying to comfort themselves, to mask their insecurities, to belittle others to aggrandize their own self-image. They are in pain and are trying to move toward pleasure. The feelings are only two after all. BUT Epicurus calls us to make prudent choices, to live nobly, well, and prudently, to try to fill our lives with more pleasure than pain. That's what I believe ALL living beings are doing. And Epicurus was brilliant in his attempt to explain this. Not everyone is going to listen. Not everyone is going to be convinced. Not everyone is going to accept that universal truth. But that is exactly what I believe is going on in the psyche of every living being.

Whether we should try to convince them of that or whether they'll accept it... that is a completely different discussion. But truth is truth, and I think Epicurus squarely hit the proverbial nail on the head.