

# Question From Chapter 1 on "Altruism"

**Post by "Cassius" of August 3, 2019 at 3:05 PM**

Also Jordan, when you read virtually any book on Epicurus written in the last 50 years you will see broad statements implying that Epicurus taught a semi-christian view of general universal brotherly love. If you stick to DeWitt through to the end you'll have no issue seeing how that goes significantly astray. Epicurus' own statements are almost always tied to "friends," and the above-referenced [PD39](#) makes clear he had no illusions about everyone in the world being his friend.

When the "universal brotherly love" utilitarians try to bring Epicurus into their camp, they most frequently turn to citing a couple of relatively ambiguous passages from Diogenes of Oinoanda, who noted on his wall that he hoped it would be good for anyone who happened to see it. Going too far into those couple of references would get us too far off track, but when you study that you'll see that Diogenes himself made drew some very clear lines. He labelled some peoples as "vile" in their corruption through religion, he never gives any indication that he intends to deviate from Epicurus, and that attitude shows that his statements are best viewed as aspirational rather than a call to "universal indiscriminating christian brotherly love."

And it's not even necessary to go to Oionanda for this illustration. Lucretius' poem is itself a good example and contains statements about how sad it is that so many people "wander in darkness" due to their errors. An Epicurean would certainly hope that everyone will come around to the Epicurean way of thinking, and so Epicurus wrote letters and books, Lucretius wrote his poem, Diogenes wrote his inscription, many others wrote their works, and we come to today with our open forums.

But as stated in Diogenes Laertius, " ....However, not every bodily constitution nor every nationality would permit a man to become wise."