

Alan Watts

Post by "Cassius" of March 1, 2020 at 8:50 AM

ELAYNE's Post Responding To The Original Outside Post:

Watts died of alcoholism... my take on him (having read him in my 20's) is that he was a somewhat pretentious person with a superficial understanding of Buddhism who enjoyed playing the guru role and maybe damaged his brain with various drugs. He was in that wave of westerners who got dazzled by the eastern philosophies and made more of them than was there. It was exotic and exciting-- I can understand how people got sucked in.

Ask yourself if it is really true that your desires for pleasure can't be satisfied. Is it? That's not true for me. I desired and got several intense pleasures today, as I described in another thread, including good food, a hike to a gorgeous creek, and time with my family. I couldn't have been happier, and I don't get bored. It is simply not true that enjoying life leads one to want pain or to want to watch girls being eaten by lions. Perhaps at 56, I am too young to say that... but I have many older friends, some in their 80's, who enjoy life very much and have not yet started clamoring that they are tired of pleasures and want to be miserable!

Watts is using suggestion in a vile way, getting people to agree that they don't know what they want and can't enjoy pleasure-- that they couldn't possibly prefer to make their own choices. Is that true for you? Sometimes what I thought I wanted hasn't been as I expected, but by paying attention, now that I am older I am pretty reliable at choosing what I enjoy. There's some trial and error, but he's promoting a sort of learned helplessness where you just give up and follow fate like a Stoic dog!

That is not anything like what Epicurus advised.

The way to decide if what Watts says is true is to use your senses and feelings-- observe what happens in your own life. What works, what doesn't? Please don't let people like Watts bamboozle you out of your choices.