

# What In Your Opinion Are the Most Essential Characteristics Of "Being An Epicurean" (According to Epicurus)?

Post by "Cassius" of February 15, 2021 at 6:09 PM

Here's another angle on that same point:

Maybe the Greeks were also used to debating these issues in terms of competing "gods." For example it's clear that in [Philebus](#), Plato has Socrates and [Philebus](#) talking in terms of a competition between their patron gods / goddesses:

Quote

SOCRATES: Then let us begin with the goddess herself, of whom [Philebus](#) says that she is called Aphrodite, but that her real name is Pleasure.

PROTARCHUS: Very good.

SOCRATES: The awe which I always feel, Protarchus, about the names of the gods is more than human—it exceeds all other fears. And now I would not sin against Aphrodite by naming her amiss; let her be called what she pleases. But Pleasure I know to be manifold, and with her, as I was just now saying, we must begin, and consider what her nature is. She has one name, and therefore you would imagine that she is one; and yet surely she takes the most varied and even unlike forms. For do we not say that the intemperate has pleasure, and that the temperate has pleasure in his very temperance,—that the fool is pleased when he is full of foolish fancies and hopes, and that the wise man has pleasure in his wisdom? and how foolish would any one be who affirmed that all these opposite pleasures are severally alike!

Quote

SOCRATES: Nor would pain, [Philebus](#), be perfectly evil. And therefore the infinite cannot be that element which imparts to pleasure some degree of good. But now—admitting, if you like, that pleasure is of the nature of the infinite—in which of the aforesaid classes, O Protarchus and [Philebus](#), can we without irreverence place wisdom and knowledge and mind? And let us be careful, for I think that the danger will be very serious if we err on this point.

[PHILEBUS](#): You magnify, Socrates, the importance of your favourite god.

SOCRATES: And you, my friend, are also magnifying your favourite goddess; but still I must beg you to answer the question.

And also Lucretius of course starts out his poem by talking about Venus.

So maybe where we find it artificial to talk about "Pleasure" as the goal, it was much more natural for the ancients to talk in terms of Venus symbolizing a guiding force or life force, as opposed to other gods (Zeus, or someone representing personified reason? -- Who is [Philebus](#) referring to as Socrates' favorite god?). So I wouldn't go too far with this at the moment without thinking further, but maybe for people who personified Pleasure as Venus it was much less of a problem to talk in terms of Pleasure or Venus / Aphrodite more interchangeably, and it was less of a mental hurdle than we have today.

At the very least I would expect that equating pleasure in one's mind as Venus was a much more reverential or "serious" way of thinking about pleasure than is evoked by the word in our minds today.

EDIT: Maybe this comment is another reason, in accord with my recent semi-joking comment, that it would be a legitimate option for some group of modern Epicureans to go ahead and embrace Venus as our "patron" goddess in a more actual "religious" sense. Even today it might be a lot more intellectually helpful to say that we "follow Venus" rather than "follow pleasure."