

For Those Who Dispute That Pleasurable Living Is the Goal of Life, What Would You Say Is The Goal Instead?

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2017 at 6:02 PM

[Cassius Amicus](#)

[March 5 at 10:36am](#)

For those here who contend that there is some goal in life higher or in any way more important than pleasurable living, may I ask you to explain what you think that goal is, and why? And if you generally agree that pleasurable living is the goal, but you feel uncomfortable with the term "pleasure" and you prefer the word "happiness," why is that, and what do you mean by a happiness that is not pleasurable?

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[James Epic](#) image not found or type unknown

[James Epic](#) My goal is included in pleasurable living. My goal is to spread the idea of kindness and compassion to others. To be a good steward of my environment and leave it in a better condition than what it was. This brings a long-term pleasure to my life.

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[Jason Baker](#) Profile link or type unknown

[Jason Baker](#) To me, all of those things are instrumental to living pleurably, not goals in themselves. I cannot live a pleasant life if I'm cocking up my immediate surroundings with garbage and poor stewardship.

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[Cassius Amicus](#) Profile link or type unknown

[Cassius Amicus](#) Agreed Jason. WHY do you spread kindness and compassion James Epic? Presumably because this gives you a mental pleasure because you have established mentally that this is your goal and you are achieving it? Or do you get direct mental pleasure from spreading kindness to people who hate you, as I referred to in the accompanying question? And if you are selective about who you spread kindness to, then are you not directly spreading kindness for the pleasure it brings?

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[James Epic](#)

[James Epic](#) I may have several meanings for environment. One meaning being kind to others and not aggressing upon them. If the "room" is gloomy and dark, I make the effort to be the light. You can't, but I would imagine others wouldn't necessarily be displeased with a dirty environment.

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[James Epic](#)

[James Epic](#) I'd say that being kind and compassionate to those that hate you, instead of harboring within yourself disdain and hate for them as well, brings more mental tranquility and pleasure to your brain than otherwise. It'd be like holding a hot stone to cast at your enemy. You may or may not hit them, but you're the one getting burned. This is not to be confused with actual self-defense and preservation.

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[Ron Warrick](#) Profile link or type unknown

[Ron Warrick](#) Can something which is "included" in something else be greater than that something?

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[James Epic](#)

[James Epic](#) Probably not, but would there a difference to be gaining pleasure from what I stated, and possibly something darker and negative? I guess that would be where society decides and philosophers discuss.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) "I guess that would be where society decides and philosophers discuss." << but up to ordinary mortals like us to decide and implement in our daily lives....

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James Epic

[James Epic](#) I'm talking about things like murder and sanctioned murder by state for example. Society has deemed it immoral to murder a fellow citizen for a non-violent reason, but approves the murder of non-citizens under a different banner. That's just one example. I do agree, we implement it in our lives, irregardless of what society currently approves of or not. Just that society is not uninvolved in our actions.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Yes absolutely. People generally talk about Epicurean theory on a pretty abstract level, but the last 10 of the [Principal Doctrines](#) are very specific as to the nature of justice, and very controversial. Lots of people who think that they can live with Epicurean goals by calling it "happiness" recoil in horror at the principles of "there is no absolute justice" in the last ten Doctrines.

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Ron Warrick

[Ron Warrick](#) [James Epic](#) "Probably not, but would there a difference to be gaining pleasure from what I stated, and possibly something darker and negative?"

Now you are changing the subject from ends to means. Generally, Epicurus's philosophy is that seriously anti-social behavior is incompatible with pleasure.

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James Epic

[James Epic](#) But what is anti-social today may not be anti-social tomorrow? That's where the discussion happens, no?

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) I am not sure I understand fully Ron's comment, but I agree with him if he means this: that "generally" anti-social behavior is incompatible with pleasure because *generally* it is going to spur a reaction from those affected to "get back" at you for that behavior. That is the principle stated in several parts of the texts and the point is that there is no absolute justice. So as is stated in PD 38, exactly as [James Epic](#) states, what is considered just (social) or unjust (anti-social) can and will change over time. I am very confident that Cassius Longinus understood his Epicurean philosophy, and he found no issue with assassination and revolution under the right circumstances (in fact he probably believed it was the logical conclusion of applying his philosophy to the circumstances)

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) The point being that because the universe consists of atoms and void constantly moving, and because there is no supernatural god, there is no absolute source of perspective or guidance from which it is possible to say that there are absolute ethical laws, which leaves us the constant in human existence that nature gave us pleasure and pain for the practical determination of what is "good" and "bad" for us. The error thus to be avoided is idealism / absolutism to think in accord with Cicero that there is one universal law controlling all people at all times and all places (and in his view enforced by god).

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[Neo Anderthal](#) Image and/or type unknown

[Neo Anderthal](#) [Cassius Amicus](#) Absolute justice can be theoretically considered to be the truth of consciousness stripped bare of all its illusions. There can be no absolute justice in illusions (of any kind). Pleasure,happiness,love and tranquility is TRUTH.

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Ron Warrick

[Ron Warrick](#) [James Epic](#) "But what is anti-social today may not be anti-social tomorrow?" Yes, and it varies from place to place and within places as well. I suspect that one of the reasons Epicurus seemed to recommend keeping our affairs as close to home as possible was to be free to make our social milieu compatible with our desires.

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Cassius Amicus

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/158-for-those-who-dispute-that-pleasurable-living-is-the-goal-of-life-what-would-you/?postID=207#post207>

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus And when those goals conflict, **James Epic**, how do you resolve the conflict? When someone you wish to spread kindness and compassion to rejects it and returns violence against you in its place, what do you do? When your goal of being "a good steward of your environment" by spending your money toward that goal conflicts with spending your money for the health of your wife and children, which do you choose?

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James Epic

James Epic My wife and children would be included in my environment. If someone rejects it, all you can do is plant the seed and walk away.

Like · **Reply** · **March 5 at 11:04am**

Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Also Matthew, you state that you do these things for the "long term pleasure it brings to your life." Absolutely in accord with Epicurean thinking, so long as that is indeed the reason you are doing them, and you have selected these goals through that very calculus of bringing more pleasure than pain. Would you dispute with someone however who was totally introverted and found no pleasure in spreading kindness and compassion to others?

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James Epic

James Epic I would discuss with them and make the case. If they chose not to agree with me, I'd respect that.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Dima Meikler or type unknown

Dima Meikler Since there is no reliable way to establish what goal it is and if objective goal even exist one must set one for himself.

I think that a good goal can be being the best version of yourself you can. This includes but not limited to experiencing pleasure. It's biologically impossible to experience pleasure all the time without dealing massive chemical damage to your body (at least before the trans humanism stage).

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) So as stated by [James Epic](#) he is not disputing that pleasurable living is the goal, he simply wants to make sure it is understood that helping others can bring pleasure too. Correct Matthew?

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James Epic

[James Epic](#) Yes, for me it brings pleasure. You asked in regards to people's opinions on goals in life. I stated the above as offshoots to my pleasure. Others may not agree with what brings me pleasure.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) [James Epic](#) but if it in fact brings you pleasure then I would not let anyone else argue with me, and I would cite Epicurus' [PD10](#) among others for the proposition that whatever in fact brings pleasure is a natural good. "If the things that produce the pleasures of profligates could dispel the fears of the mind about the phenomena of the sky and death and its pains, and also teach the limits of desires (and of pains), we should never have cause to blame them: for they would be filling themselves full with pleasures from every source and never have pain of body or mind, which is the evil of life."

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James Epic

[James Epic](#) What do you mean by not letting anyone argue with me? Like speech censor? If not through argument, how would I get my point of view across to them? Or do you mean that if someone gains pleasure from what I disagree with, I shouldn't share my pov on it but let them go on doing what they're doing, even if delusion is possible involved?

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Michael Carteron
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[Michael Carteron](#) What about those like Marquis de Sade who have gained pleasure

from inflicting pain? I think we need to make a note of Epicurean justice here.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) [James Epic](#) No i did not mean speech censor, I was using the colloquial expression for considering such speech to be nonsense and rejecting it, not suppressing it.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) [Michael Carteron](#) yes indeed there are those who get pleasure from inflicting pain, and if we who wish to live our lives happily want to continue doing so then we put the hammer down on that person in any way possible. See PD 6 and from Torquatus: "“Yet nevertheless some men indulge without limit their avarice, ambition and love of power, lust, gluttony and those other desires, which ill-gotten gains can never diminish but rather must inflame the more, so much so that they appear proper subjects for restraint rather than for reformation.”"

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) Yes. De Sade claimed people such as him should be free do as they please, and there is no objective morality stopping them. Yet this contradicts itself, for others will "do as they please" also through restraining him for their own sake, and who is he to ever call it wrong by his own philosophy?

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) OK [Dima Meikler](#) steps up to the bar. WHY Dima would you chose some other goal - for what motivating factor?

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Dima Meikler

[Dima Meikler](#) I know that your looking for me to answer "pleasure". But this would be arguing over semantics of how pleasure is defined. I understand pleasure as the positive bodily feedback you get from doing things you are programmed to like by evolution.

Experie...[See More](#)

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) I agree with most all you wrote until the last sentence, which drops the context you established previously. Yes the brain is wired to embrace pleasure and avoid pain. And so ****based on that wiring**** the only logical and natural course is to choose a life goal that produces the greatest pleasure and the least pain. To choose any other life goal, given this context, is unnatural and illogical.

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Dima Meikler

[Dima Meikler](#) I don't think that there is a logical and natural goal, if there were everyone would agree on it. Come to think of it life has only one natural inevitable goal - death.

So we shouldn't talk about a goal but rather about the process. Minimising pain and maximising pleasure during this process should be the natural automatic tendency of all biological being but as humans we transended into this more complicated stage where it's not clear what is pleasure and what is pain. Is running a marathon pleasurable or uncomfortable? Are long months of exercising your will to train and doing the hard run itself while experiencing discomfort worth the pleasure of achieving the goal of finishing? Some will say that finishing is so pleasurable it's worth it. But why? Does the feeling of victory lasts for the same time as the pain of preparation? Or does the memory of achievement lasts forever? And what if you fail or get amnesia, etc. It's too subjective.

What is clear is that sometimes exercising will and reason and submitting to discomfort or sacrificing for a higher goal can lead to satisfaction. But is it really pleasure? Is having a threesome is as pleasurable as the satisfaction of being a national hero that died in a tragic way for example? Who knows...

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

James Epic

[James Epic](#) What a great question op! I'm curious as to your view on this quote, "And if that seems desirable to you which costs another pain or sorrow, cast it out of your heart; so shall you attain to peace. Better it is to endure sorrow, than to inflict it on those who are weaker." Does this conflict with Epicureanism?

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/158-for-those-who-dispute-that-pleasurable-living-is-the-goal-of-life-what-would-you/?postID=207#post207>

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Yes, [James Epic](#), as broadly worded as that is, I do believe that Epicurus would disagree. The problem is its broadness. It is the foundation of Epicurean justice that the wise man will not do violence to his neighbor, but for the specific reason that his neighbor or his neighbor's friends will in the end retaliate, and one can never be sure of safety after doing something like that. But that is a practical reason, and if in fact violence were to lead to a happy life, violence would be acceptable in that person's life.

The overbroadness of this statement can easily be seen by the fact that we readily do violence to those who would do violence to us in order to protect ourselves, yet in that instance we believe that "costing another pain or sorrow" is fully justified.

So as Epicurus advised, justice must be evaluated in the context of the particular people involved, and statements like the one you listed are dangerous because they obscure the guiding principle, which is pleasurable living for ourselves and those who are our friends.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) And I actually focused only on the first sentence of your passage. As for this one Better it is to endure sorrow, than to inflict it on those who are weaker." then what I said I think applies with even greater force.

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James Epic

[James Epic](#) Thanks, I came to a similar conclusion. That it needs to be clarified. For example, if you want to trade 20 silver coins for my boat, and I refuse you, I've in turn created sorrow in you.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Right - "pain" and "pleasure" are VERY broad terms, and certainly include mental pain and pleasure and not just physical pain and pleasure. So the point of this original post is to sort out whether anyone other than religionists seriously contends that...[See More](#)

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) Even "doing what God wants" always comes down to pain vs. pleasure. Do what he wants and your reward will then be the ultimate pleasure. Do what he doesn't want? An ultimate pain.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Yes I agree Michael, but I am not sure that applies across the board to all religions (?). It certainly applies to the sort of Christianity I am most familiar with, but I am not at all sure that it applies to eastern religions that seem to promote nothingness or ideals quite different from personal pleasure

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) I can't claim familiarity with all religions of course. However it seems that Buddhism for instance promotes release from the world as it claims this is suffering. The similarity between ataraxia and nirvana is claimed by some.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) I am going to be away for a while now but I welcome other responses. My goal here is not to look for takers to start an argument, but to get sincere, cogently stated objections from people in 2017 who are reading the internet. It helps all of us to know what people today are thinking and not just presume that the old debates from 2000 years ago would be argued on the same terms.

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Christos Tsigaridas Profile picture unknown

[Christos Tsigaridas](#) Most of the people THINK that "happiness" has a HOLY (RELIGIOUS) aspect and pleasure has a lot to do with SEXUALITY Imagine if there was NO PLEASURE in sex ? PLATONIC LOVE is "happiness" but not pleasure And without pleasure no reproduction We would not be here IF was not pleasure and what LIFE is if you don't have "PLEASURE" ? If you don't have SEX ?

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[Matt Jackson](#) or type unknown

[Matt Jackson](#) I think one of the biggest stumbling blocks of the acceptance of pleasure is the idealism that comes from abstract ideas i.e. belief that the world is crude and corrupt and the soul is pure etc. this has a very Gnostic and Neoplatonist flavor. Sex and other pleasures become part of the corrupt world and are avoided.

[Christos](#), brings up a good point about "holiness." There is a sort of "virtuous" conception of holiness especially among people of Christian background. It's a corruption of the original idea due to early philosophical synthesis with Christian theology. An examination of the earlier Semitic scripture shows that originally "holy" or "qodesh" meant something separate belonging unto a deity. It is almost entirely materialistic and hardly ever used in an abstract sense. Sex and pleasurable activities are acceptable and promoted given that they are lawful...there is no edict that man should avoid pleasure just as long as they fit into the many societal laws (often deity ordained.) Certain characters such as David is a blood thirsty warlord that womanizes yet he is also considered righteous or "qodesh" just as the austere Daniel or Elijah are also holy, though they lived very different types of lives. It has more to do with their relationship with a deity than it does with an abstract virtue. It isn't until much later in the Christian Era that Platonic abstract virtues become things to strive for, rejection of the physical world and awaiting the apocalyptic World to Come. But we must see that the original idea of holiness wasn't abstract. It was physical, it was holy as long as it belonged to the deity or was important to the worship of the deity. The deity made it holy. Holiness depends on the presence of deity. It doesn't stand alone as a virtue of its own. That idea came much later.

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[James Epic](#)

[James Epic](#) I can think of a number of reasons why sex is not pleasurable, that has no connection with pureness of soul.

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[Jason Baker](#)

[Jason Baker](#) Well James Epic, don't be a tease, complete your thought.

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Jason Baker

Jason Baker **Matt Jackson**, don't answer for him. He made the claim, he has the burden of explaining it. He didn't say rape, he said sex without any adjectives or modifiers.

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Matt Jackson

Matt Jackson My main point was basically bouncing off of Christos that what most people consider "holy" i.e. virtuous in relation to purity of soul, by abstaining from physical things and denying pleasure simply has no real basis in early religion and has more to do with later abstractions.

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James Epic

James Epic Haha I was thinking along the lines of STD's, potential child entrapment, jealousy, zombie brain, control/seduction, false rape accusations, time wasting, desire for it after it's removed etc. You did mention though that a lot of these can be avoided with "proper" intercourse, though some still exist with that

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James Epic

James Epic Let's not forget performance anxiety.

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Matt Jackson

Matt Jackson Lol!

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Jason Baker

Jason Baker Why would you, pardon my crudeness, dip your wick in someone who would cause you this sort of suffering? Take it in hand if you can't find a partner with compatible outlook and goals as yourself. Sex is a natural but unnecessary desire, pursuing it to the detriment of your health, physical and emotional is a serious miscalculation.

Sex isn't the problem, it's not taking care of yourself that is the problem. The fact that you have confused sex with the behaviors that accompany it in the uninformed

and profligate don't make sex a problem. Can you see where I'm going with this?

"There's a process of befriending the self which is needed to declare the commitment to Epicureanism, which includes being considerate for the future self." -

[Hiram Crespo](#)

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) [Jason Baker](#) Hey that's a good quote from Hiram - never seen that but it is good!   type unknown

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James Epic

[James Epic](#) [Jason Baker](#) I understand where you are going. A lot of those risks can happen as a result of deceit. Not only deceit, but the partner you've decided to mate with who was once an angel, can change into a devil.

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Jason Baker

[Jason Baker](#) Lucretius has some words that might be helpful to remember when letting oneself be seduced by angels; "et miseram taetris se suffit odoribus ipsa."

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Matt Jackson

[Matt Jackson](#) So speaking of angels and devils, the point of my post was to illustrate that the common idea of holiness is removed from its original Semitic connotation. Without a deity, holiness is nothing. If you wanted to try to attach holiness to some abstract virtue then you are free to, but it renders it meaningless.

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Matt Jackson

[Matt Jackson](#) It's the equivalent of an atheistic Christianity, that Jesus was not a divine being but just a good mortal, moral teacher. It doesn't really make sense without the majestic God behind him. If he wasn't who he said he was, like St. Paul says himself, he was a babbling liar. So actually NOT a good teacher.

So no deity no righteousness and no holiness. You now have to create some

universal standard by which abstract virtues can exist independently across all cultures.

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James Epic

James Epic Matt Jackson I see what you're saying. The Gospel I follow doesn't claim that Jesus was the son of God, but a son of God. A messenger not cloaked in divinity, but whose message was morally divine. Not to get into too religious of a discussion, but I do not subscribe to the miracles, more so the man and his teachings. No less respect than I have for the Buddha or Epicurus.

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James Epic

James Epic He wasn't a babbling liar when many of the lies written were put down far after his death by others.

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Matt Jackson

Matt Jackson For me personally it's all or nothing. Either the man walked on water and rose from the dead according to the Gospels, or he did none of those things. His message in my opinion is unintelligible without divine backing. Otherwise he's the equivalent of a subway preacher on a soapbox.

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Matt Jackson

Matt Jackson  [Image may contain: 1 person, beard](#)

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Jason Baker

Jason Baker I agree **Matt**. I never understood what it was about Jesus that Jefferson took a shine to. Too bad Jesus never wrote a book. You would think a divine such as he would have the foresight to think about the difficulties of exegesis and make things plain to his followers.

It's a shame we don't know any Classical author who did exactly that. Oh wait, who's this Epicurus bloke?

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Matt Jackson

Matt Jackson Lol!

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Matt Jackson

Matt Jackson I just expect more from divinity than most I guess. In the absence of deity and the supernatural, nature is the standard.

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Jason Baker

Jason Baker Well Matt, that's because you won't let Jesus into your heart. If you don't let Jesus into your heart, you'll never feel his love and understand his magical book. It will look like nonsense to you. Not your right ventricle, mind, that'll just give you a stroke.

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Matt Jackson

Matt Jackson "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone."

Mark 10:18

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Matt Jackson

Matt Jackson Without the backing even he knew he was nothing.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Kris Pliotis Image not found or type unknown

Kris Pliotis To be in a pleasure-giving friendship with somebody next to me and be in harmony with him makes me happy. There are no.singel feelings but a ful of feelings putting together: pleasure of eyes, pleasure of feelings, pleasure of friendship, pleasure of sincere reactions, pleasure of art, pleasure of musicall together!!!!!! Difficult to reach that state i agree. But I found a way for that: Read greek philosophy and greek civilisation books !!!!!!!

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Kris Pliotis

[Kris Pliotis](#) Greek civilisation targets only MAN. No gods

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[Elli Pensa](#) ound or type unknown

[Elli Pensa](#) [Kris Pliotis](#) hi ! Greek books on greek civilisation and Greek philosophy in general is something unspecific and not so clear, for me as an Epicurean.

Since Plato and the stoic philosophy supports that is examing things and issues according to the greek philosophy. What do you say about that ? I would like to have in a few words your opinion on this issue. f642.png type unknown

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Ron Warrick

[Ron Warrick](#) If you are a parent, what do you want most for your children, that they be happy, or turn out to be virtuous? I think only the most puritanical would say the latter is more important for their children. Why should we prefer less for ourselves?

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Christos Tsigaridas

[Christos Tsigaridas](#) Don't do whatever you like but you SHOULD like what you do

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[Elli Pensa](#) [Christos](#) could you show me this phrase of yours, in one or two of Epicurus sayings to understand better what do you say with these "DON" and "SHOULD" ?? Because I do not realize where is the algorithm on the desires and where is the real goal. Thanks