

## SOE13: The goal of religion

Post by “Hiram” of December 31, 2019 at 12:04 PM

I know of the benefits of chanting from experience, so this passed the test of the canon for me many years ago, but I specifically cited Diamond in my book, but [a quick google search gives others:](#)

*Neuro-scientist Marian Diamond from the University of California found that chanting **helps block the release of stress hormones and increases immune function. It also keeps our muscles and joints flexible for a long time.***

For our purposes, we are looking for psycho-somatic effects of pious activities, in other words bodily and mental effects. Diamond proved that Epicurus was on to something there, that we can cultivate certain pleasant / healthy and happy dispositions through ethical / pious practices.

I want to stress here that **the point is not to say "Epicurans should do this", but to say "see, Epicurus was on to something" and to show how he placed piety in the body. And that this is a unique contribution of Epicurus to ethics.**

(I cite a Marian Diamond source in my book, but I don't have my book with me, I'm at work. But [Diamond died in 2017 and was also a neuroscientist](#), so the study of chanting and contemplation is mainly happening in that field, and Sam Harris is probably the main proponent)

---

*A study by Dr Alan Watkins [senior lecturer in neuroscience at Imperial College London] revealed that **while chanting, our heart rate and blood pressure dip to its lowest in the day.** Doctors say that even listening to chants normalises adrenalin levels, brain wave pattern and lowers cholesterol levels.*

(I searched for this, [there's a study on Gregorian chants](#) in particular but he also did a study on sports and endurance that I can't open because it's PDF and my browser is acting up)

Also, atheist author and neuroscientist Sam Harris has participated in studies on the brain while meditating. This is a whole emerging science. His essay [Killing the Buddha](#) inspired, in part, the chapter on contemplation in my book. He was arguing that if contemplation is scientific, then it is NOT merely Buddhist, just as alchemy became chemistry and is no longer Islamic. He says there needs to be a "SCIENCE of contemplation". In his essay [How to Meditate](#), Harris cites many studies here:

*Cultivating this quality of mind has been shown to [modulate pain](#), mitigate [anxiety](#) and [depression](#), improve [cognitive function](#), and even produce [changes in gray matter density](#) in regions of the brain related to learning and memory, emotional regulation, and self awareness.*

The science here is still emerging.