

# **Response to Donald Robertson Question: "Was Thomas Jefferson More Stoic Or Epicurean?" (Answer: Epicurean!)**

**Post by "Cassius" of February 9, 2020 at 7:39 AM**

My response to Donald:

My general response to all of these is that I thought the point of our discussion was to decide whether Jefferson was more Stoic than Epicurean! What I have done in the article is to point out that (1) Jefferson fully understood the basic differences between Stoics and Epicurus, and that he sided with Epicurus on every fundamental point and (2) that on the points where Epicurus agrees with a Stoic phrase, the point behind the Stoic phrase is obvious and is not related to the core of Stoic belief. I may go back and prepare some more detailed comments to several of Don's points here, but I am already very comfortable that a reader who checks the material I have quoted from Jefferson will find that I am correct.

This exchange so far is actually kind of amusing in seeing that Donald does not accept my quotes from Jefferson as bearing on the issue, or that they need additional "argument" from me. The reason for that goes back to the comments about my opening - Donald and I have a very different understanding of what Stoicism is. When I say "Stoicism" I mean the very clearly defined positions of the ancient Stoics; when Donald says it, he seems to primarily mean Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, tinged with selected aspects of Stoic views toward suppression of emotion.

I don't read anything in these series of comments from DR that make me think my article needs adjustment or supplement to assist a fair reader. Yes, Jefferson was widely read and appreciated some selected quotes from Stoics that are little more than common sense observations. Jefferson didn't and wouldn't deny that the sun rises in the east just because a Stoic said it, but at the same time he was fully aware of the true meaning of Stoicism and totally rejected it.