

"Religion is a part of me"... how to deal with that?

Post by "smoothiekiwi" of January 12, 2022 at 11:11 AM

Hey all!

Today, I had a beautiful conversation with a friend of mine. In typical Socratic manner, it was a pleasure to destroy his arguments regarding religion (and yes, I asked why don't kill oneself when there's endless pleasure in heaven- it's very funny to see my argument in the description of this thread list!) Basically, if one would have to draw a winner, I would claim this position for myself. It was honestly a very pleasant talk, and I think that we both had a lot of fun during it.

Still, his last sentence has stuck in my mind: "Christianity is a part of me. I'm not A- the "normal" person, and B- the Christian; I'm A and B." And this has stuck in my mind. My friend has even agreed that religion isn't necessary in order to behave yourself good and be happy, yet with this one argument, he basically neutralized my entire argumentation.

What do you think of that?

Post by "Cassius" of January 12, 2022 at 1:03 PM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

What do you think of that?

One thing I think about that is that I recall Frances Wright wrote this about debating with friends, in "A Few Days In Athens" Chapter Eight"

Quote

Theon stopped, and, making a short apology, hastily retired. "Stay!" cried the master. Theon again entered, but did not advance much within the threshold.

"When I bade you stay, I did not mean to fix you as doorkeeper. Come in, and shut the door behind you." Theon joyfully obeyed, and hurried to seize the extended hand of the sage." Since you have intruded on the sanctuary, I shall not drive you out." He

motioned the youth to a place on his couch. "And now, what pretty things am I to say to you for your yesterday's defense of the wicked Gargettian? You should have come home with me last night, when we were both hot from the combat, and then I could have made you an eloquent compliment in full assembly at the Symposium, and you would as eloquently have disclaimed it with one of your modest blushes."

"Then, truly, if the master had such an intention, I am very glad I did not follow him. But I passed the evening at my own lodgings, with my friend Cleanthes."

"Trying to talk him into good humor and charity, was it?"

"Something so."

"And you succeeded?"

"Verily, I don't know; he did not leave me in worse humor than he came."

"Nay, then it must have been in better. Explanation always approaches or widens the differences between friends."

"Yes, but we also entered into argument."

"Dangerous ground that, to be sure. And your fight, of course, ended in a drawn battle."

"You pay me more than a merited compliment, in concluding that to be a thing of course."

"Nay, your pardon! I pay you any thing but a compliment. It is not that I conclude your rhetoric and your logic equal, but your obstinacy and your vanity."

"Do you know, I don't think myself either obstinate or vain," said Theon, smiling.

"Had I supposed you did, I might not have seen occasion to give you the information."

"But on what grounds do you think me obstinate and vain?"

"Your years; your years. And do you think there is a man under twenty that is not both?"

"Why, I should think an old man, at least, more obstinate than a young one."

"I grant you, when he is obstinate, which is pretty often, but not quite always; and when he is vain, the same. But whilst many old men have vanity and obstinacy in the superlative degree, all young men have those qualities in the positive. I believe your share to be tolerably moderate, but do not suppose that you have no share at all. Well,

and now tell me, was it not a drawn battle?"

"I confess it was. At least, we neither of us convinced the other."

"My son, it would have added one more to the seven wonders if you had. I incline to doubt, if two men, in the course of an olympiad, enter on an argument from the honest and single desire of coming at the truth, or if, in the course of a century, one man comes from an argument convinced by his opponent."

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Post by "Matt" of January 12, 2022 at 1:06 PM

Hi @smoothiekiwi, can you please clarify what argument you were making in particular and what argument your friend was making in particular?

I'm not sure I fully understand your friend's last sentence as being exceedingly meaningful. What implication do you believe it has?

Post by "smoothiekiwi" of January 12, 2022 at 1:37 PM

Quote

"My son, it would have added one more to the seven wonders if you had. I incline to doubt, if two men, in the course of an olympiad, enter on an argument from the honest and single desire of coming at the truth, or if, in the course of a century, one man comes from an argument convinced by his opponent."

Absolutely! And that's why I think that the beauty of debate is not who has won, but who had the most fun while having that debate. The amount of fun certainly is- at least partially- aligned with who has the best chance of victory, but not only. Even so, I had a lot of fun in it 😄

[Matt](#), with great pleasure! I (obviously) cannot remember every single argument, but I can try and reassemble the approximate argumentation. We began by discussing if there's an absolute virtue (I now begin to understand that Plato is responsible for A LOT of suffering!) . I asked how a God can exist if there's so much suffering in the world, and my friend answered that the

suffering is because of free will and that men will pay for the suffering inducted by their sins in heaven. Then, I asked that when men will suffer in heaven eternally, then heaven won't be heaven, but hell. My friend answered that they'll only suffer for some time, but the suffering will then get lower and lower, because God will forgive them. As a consequence, I asked how God can forgive everyone, because some misdeeds don't seem forgivable for me; and if everything is forgivable, then I might as well be sinful and have a lot of fun before I come into paradise. My friend agreed with me, but said that we should still try and be good, because he don't want to let his parents suffer by harming other people. And then I asked why he needed the concept of paradise and heaven in all of that, and he couldn't answer that. Thus, I tried to extent the logic by asking why he needs God- and then his answer came.

Basically, that was our argument (I probably have left out or forgotten a lot of it, sorry 😊) Anyways, as I've mentioned, it was honestly respectful and a lot of fun, and thus very pleasurable. Still, I'm wondering that I couldn't find an answer to his answer- that the belief in God is an intrinsic part of him. Extended to the name of this sub-thread, "Dealing with the Non-Epicurean world", I'm not sure how much influence we as a community can exhibit, if other people think that dogmas are an intrinsic part of them. And I haven't found an answer to that, sadly. 😞

Post by “Matt” of January 12, 2022 at 1:55 PM

Religious identity is very important to many people. I too grew up with a “religious” identity and it still echoes in my life even now. Arguments in the realm of religion often are fruitless whether it is a secular atheist/agnostic arguing against a Christian, a Christian arguing against a Muslim, a Hindu arguing against a Buddhist etc. because all theological concepts are based in abstraction and are essentially unprovable, there is no real argument to be had and essentially the religious person spends the time “justifying” why they believe in an abstraction (without evidence) and why you should adopt their world view. It’s often more trouble than it’s worth...but again these people hold religion to be a part of their identity and it’s good to remain friendly as possible (as long as they are) without too much turbulence.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 12, 2022 at 2:08 PM

Quote from [smoothiekiwi](#)

Still, I'm wondering that I couldn't find an answer to his answer- that the belief in God is an intrinsic part of him

I think that the belief in god can be a component of self-identity, and also a way for the human mind to relate to the experience of the inner sense of self, the sense of "I-ness". So at his current level of development, he has an inner relationship with his sense of "I-ness" in which he needs to have a god to make sense of things, and therefore his religion feels like an intrinsic part of himself. It is good for those in Epicurean philosophy to understand when they see this in others. Eventually people grow out of their need for myths. (Also see Principle Doctrine 12).

This will shed more light:

[Ep. 6: Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth -- 'Masks of Eternity' | BillMoyers.com](#)

Bill Moyers and Joseph Campbell discuss the common experience of God across cultures.
billmoyers.com

Post by “Cassius” of January 12, 2022 at 2:14 PM

1 - I had a friend once who was a big joseph campbell fan, but I never figured him out. It's possible that he deserves a thread here somewhere, but I don't even know enough to have an opinion on that.

2 -

[Quote from Matt](#)

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I am not sure that this isn't part of what [Velleius was talking about in "On the Nature of the Gods."](#) Very complex issue.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 12, 2022 at 2:40 PM

[Matt](#) - agree on that, and that's probably a big lesson I'll take with me. Somehow sad, but again- in some thread I raised the issue of courage, and here it comes again. My friend even admitted that he's scared of the real world and needs God and the prospect of eternal life in order to fight through this whole mess. Sad, because he could have great pleasures in our current lives, but it's his choice. Maybe he'll come to the realization that he doesn't need a God in order to be happy. I honestly hope so.

(and that sounds a bit like the Christian argument: "I hope that he'll find to God one day", but in contrast to that, I don't believe in invisible sky men and thus consider my point of view empirically provable, and thus with a higher probability true!)

[Kalosyni](#) - yep, agree on that! And thanks for sharing - probably I'll listen to the podcast, because it seems very interesting. Will probably update this thread when I'll have done that.

Post by “Matt” of January 12, 2022 at 2:40 PM

I do not come across many “philosophical” Christians...and I mean people who purely follow the faith from the ethical teachings as the main REASON for following their faith such as “loving thy neighbor” and “turning the other cheek” etc...whether these teachings are realistic or doable is another debate entirely. And it would be a good debate to discuss these issues.

But the majority of religious people follow the religion follow it because it's a tradition they grew up with or due to some metaphysical aspect of life after death/judgement. And they really don't think deeply about the philosophical implications of what they believe. Their position is based solely on metaphysical ontological and cosmological positions that usually have their roots in Platonic philosophy that is ultimately divorced from the texts. The high level macrocosmic arguments really have no basis in how we live life here and now.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 12, 2022 at 2:47 PM

[Matt](#) , stop reading my mind! That's irritating me 😏

But seriously, your words are exactly the stuff I thought about, but couldn't express. Everything you've written can be applied to two of my friends who are Christians. I think that I can't speak of all Christians, because there're many educated, smart and deep-thinking people out there

who believe in a sky man, but I still can't do anything other than to remember a quote from Socrates: "an unexamined life is not worth living". And what is a life without thinking what your belief implies and has as a consequence? I wouldn't call it examined.

By stating this, I do not want by any means state that I'm better than "them". Quite the contrary- I've just begun examining my own life, and have many dogmas and false beliefs. I acknowledge that in order to reach happiness, I have to help other people. That's my way of getting fulfillment and pleasure. And I think that one of the biggest reasons why people suffer is because of beliefs and unnecessary desires- in essence, religion. Thus, I do now want to state that I'm wiser than Christians, or more experienced, simply because I study a certain philosophy right now. That would be stupid. Yet I honestly believe that religion draws a lot of suffering at its tail, and that's why I'm fighting against it.

Post by "Matt" of January 12, 2022 at 2:56 PM

Religion 100% does cause unnecessary suffering...and simultaneously it is perceived to be a panacea for all life's difficulties by those who promote it . Yet many times the metaphysical solution is not a cure but a distraction. The question becomes how to fill the vacuum when religion hurts a person who once was religious and now looks for meaning in life. Epicurus might be the "cure" for that person who is ready to make the jump out of religion and is courageously ready to face the stark reality of this world.

Post by "Kalosyni" of January 12, 2022 at 3:01 PM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

As a consequence, I asked how God can forgive everyone, because some misdeeds don't seem forgivable for me; and if everything is forgivable, then I might as well be sinful and have a lot of fun before I come into paradise. My friend agreed with me, but said that we should still try and be good, because he don't want to let his parents suffer by harming other people.

I had some further reactions to your story, and I want to point out that...I think it is important to be careful about the word "sin" (and "sinful") because there are two things being mixed up here.

One understanding of "sin" is that it is the harming or hurting of another person, and all the things that we in a civilized world, understand as "wrong" because they cause pain to someone else. There are different levels of moral understanding: It could be based on fear of punishment - either by the judicial system of society, or by social ostracisation (or fear of getting a bad reputation or disappointing others). Also most people will react toward inflicted pain with some kind of retaliation, or they will no longer trust you. We also have our inner conscience and this will follow us for the rest of our lives in the form of our memories. When you fully understand "pain and pleasure" you see the importance of non-harming. Every person moves toward pleasure and recoils from pain. Why would you do to someone something that you would not want to be done to you? If you cause pain to others, and then justify it in some way, you will begin to attract others to you who also cause pain to others...and this will put you into harms way...and then you will live in fear that you will be harmed.

Then secondly there are the "sinful" things which have been invented to "try" to make certain aspects of civilization function more smoothly, but come from some religious opinions (for example: sex before is wrong marriage, dancing is wrong, drinking alcohol is wrong, etc.) and these opinions are not inherently correct. These are things which only cause pain when there is a lack of mutual consent or when there is over-indulgence (when there is a potential for pain, and when the person is not being fully responsible). So would guess it this second instance of "sinful" in which you said "might as well be sinful and have a lot of fun".

And I want to correct this idea of "sin" being "fun"...as this is incorrect. We cannot live a joyous life without living wisely and rightly:

Principle Doctrine 5:

It is not possible to live joyously without also living wisely and beautifully and rightly, nor to
5. live wisely and beautifully and rightly without living joyously; and whoever lacks this cannot live joyously. [\[note\]](#)

Also there is this with regard to the second category I wrote about, and so one makes choices not to do things that will result in pain. For example, I would say that at all Epicureans would not do binge drinking.

8. No pleasure is bad in itself; but the means of paying for some pleasures bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves. [\[note\]](#)

Post by “Matt” of January 12, 2022 at 3:41 PM

Yes “sin” is a loaded word outside of the religion it corresponds to. It is so culturally and ecclesiastically specific and relative that it is almost impossible to discuss without significant context.

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 12, 2022 at 3:56 PM

Matt nailed it. "Christianity" to most people is a fun social club they visit every few Sundays. It's that "good feeling" that requires no further analysis. It's not the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, nor the ecumenical councils of Imperial Rome, nor the theological debates among Messianic Jewish sects, nor the influences of Hellenistic philosophy that colored the vocabulary of most of the New Testament, nor the wars of the medieval period, nor the tension between the institutions and the scientific findings that they inadvertently facilitated ... it's a gold cross on your neck, familiar smiles in the sanctuary, a fish on your bumper, and coffee and donuts on your day off. It's the equivalent of emotionally dissimilar teenagers grouping themselves by the clothes they wear and the music to which they listen.

It's not the kind of thing I'd hope for a human adult trying living their best life.

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 12, 2022 at 4:04 PM

I also think that the "Christian" label in America is often employed as a synonym for "**anti-Communist**" with absolutely no indication whatsoever as to whether or not that person is familiar with the history of 1st-century Palestine.

Post by “Matt” of January 12, 2022 at 4:16 PM

100%   @Nate

Post by “Pacatus” of January 12, 2022 at 4:54 PM

I grew up steeped in Christianity, and in my adult years became a liberal Anglican. I read folks like Gregory of Nyssa and Clement of Alexandria; and Protestant theologians like Paul Tillich and Jurgen Moltmann; a bit of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar in the Roman Catholic tradition; and three of the five volumes of Jaroslav Pelikan's history of church doctrine; etc., etc. I realized in the end that I was searching for some way to believe (in terms of honest assent) the core truth claims. In the end, I could not.

At the same time, I realized I was deeply steeped aesthetically: the poetry, the art (especially Greek Orthodox icons), the "bells and smells," the eucharist, the music. I tried returning to church for all of that, sans the doctrine -- but they always intruded themselves. I can't do it (even though I think that Epicurus would not object).

And most of the Christians I knew -- including priests and deacons -- were wonderful people. (But I was mostly insulated from puritanical fundamentalists.) I do not argue with them, nor disparage their beliefs. If asked, I might speak my truth "quietly and clearly" (as the Desiderata says) as best as I understand it (knowing I might often be wrong), as I strive to "go placidly amid the noise and the haste."

I still listen to Gregorian chant sometimes, and even Taize music. When they are not in English, my mind does not busy itself with translating (even if I recognize some Latin words). I can take that as a lovely form of meditation. But the nostalgia is always there. I suspect it always will be. And that's okay.

Post by "smoothiekiwi" of January 14, 2022 at 9:28 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

One understanding of "sin" is that it is the harming or hurting of another person, and all the things that we in a civilized world, understand as "wrong" because they cause pain to someone else. There are different levels of moral understanding: It could be based on fear of punishment - either by the judicial system of society, or by social ostracisation (or fear of getting a bad reputation or disappointing others). Also most people will react toward inflicted pain with some kind of retaliation, or they will no longer trust you. We also have our inner conscience and this will follow us for the rest of our lives in the form of our memories. When you fully understand "pain and pleasure" you see the importance of non-harming. Every person moves toward pleasure and recoils from pain. Why would you do to someone something that you would not want to be done to you? If you cause pain to others, and then justify it in

some way, you will begin to attract others to you who also cause pain to others...and this will put you into harms way...and then you will live in fear that you will be harmed.

[Kalosyni](#) , I'm sorry that it took some time for me to answer- but I think that you've made a very good point, and I had to think about it for a while. I remember Epicureanism being described as altruistic hedonism, and your point has only added proof for that: that harming other people will most often draw more harm to you.

Still, I think that there may be- rare- situations where it's necessary to harm other people in order to be individually happy... because if you don't, then that means that it becomes some sort of abstract thought or dogma, like "thou shall not harm thy neighbor". But I also have to admit that I can't think of any example where consciously inflicting pain on someone will bring you more pleasure in the long run... what do you think on that?

Also, there's the issue of love. Just today, I found myself thinking that the thing which prevents me from inflicting pain on someone is altruism and the wish to make their lives better- that's my definition of love. But in that case, one might ask: "why then not choose a philosophy like Buddhism or Christianity, which focuses way more on this topic?" A psychopath can justify killing a person, if he surely knows that he won't be found; but a loving person will never be able. [Cassius](#) , do you know anything on the topic of love in Epicureanism? It seems to me like a natural desire, but I'm not sure if necessary or not. Maybe I'll open a new thread on this, because it seems like a difficult topic.

So- TL; DR- I completely agree with your statement, that it makes sense to create good 😊

[Quote from Nate](#)

It's not the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, nor the ecumenical councils of Imperial Rome, nor the theological debates among Messianic Jewish sects, nor the influences of Hellenistic philosophy that colored the vocabulary of most of the New Testament, nor the wars of the medieval period, nor the tension between the institutions and the scientific findings that they inadvertently facilitated ... it's a gold cross on your neck, familiar smiles in the sanctuary, a fish on your bumper, and coffee and donuts on your day off

@Nate, when I read your lines, I thought to myself "that's what attracts me to Christianity!" Because it really sounds like a lot of fun (and pleasure 😊)- to meet up with like-minded friends, discuss philosophical issues and generally enjoying a day off. And I found myself asking: "What if I can have the same, but without the religious doctrines on it?" It sounds like a dream to me! Even so, wouldn't it make sense to adapt the Christian worldview- at least partly- in order to experience this pleasure, or will it have more pain in the long run?

[Quote from Nate](#)

It's not the kind of thing I'd hope for a human adult trying living their best life.

That's a shame :(But why are there then so many adult Christians?

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 9:55 AM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

I remember Epicureanism being described as altruistic hedonism

Yes, but that's another example of why categories are dangerous. What is "altruism"? Putting others first always? That would certainly not be Epicurean. What is "hedonism?" Putting pleasure first always? Yes, from a certain perspective, but absolutely no from a moment to moment perspective, because we often choose pain to avoid worse pain or pursue greater pleasure. And here is where I particularly agree with Elli's criticism of "ism's" - anything that suggests a single goal that orients every other decision (other than pleasure) is going to be a bad idea at certain times. And even "pleasure-ism" doesn't accurately convey the point to most people. If you insisted on an "ism" -- the only one that would be most consistent with Epicurus' full worldview would be "Epicureanism" -- which does not appear to be the way even the ancient Epicurean's phrased it.

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

Just today, I found myself thinking that the thing which prevents me from inflicting pain on someone is altruism and the wish to make their lives better- that's my definition of love.

That may be your definition of love, but then "love" isn't the ultimate value in the Epicurean worldview, so has to be treated with caution too. 😊 As [you observed smoothiekiwi in another recent thread](#), not every example of prudent eating is Epicurean. Not every instance of "common sense" is Epicurean, and by similar token not every instance of love, or even of pleasure, is something that Epicurus advised everyone to engage in all the time.

I don't intend this to sound harsh of course but it's really challenging to think through the implications of what Epicurus is teaching. It doesn't add up to "god is love" or even "the universe is pleasure" or any kind of master intention-based plan of action that applies everywhere and all the time. "Pleasure" probably comes the closest to the universal motivating force, but every time we say that we need to remember that Epicurus was plain that we don't

choose every immediate pleasure.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 14, 2022 at 10:48 AM

It didn't sound harsh, I allow myself to make errors 😊

But you're right. I think that that's one of the most beautiful things about Epicureanism- that there aren't any "thou shalt do that"- stuff.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 11:12 AM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

Still, I think that there may be rare situations where it's necessary to harm other people in order to be individually happy... because if you don't, then that means that it becomes some sort of abstract thought or dogma, like "thou shall not harm thy neighbor". But I also have to admit that I can't think of any example where consciously inflicting pain on someone will bring you more pleasure in the long run... what do you think on that?

There could be an instance of a "protective use of force"...an act of self-protection coming from a need to defend your own safety or the safety of someone you love...in which you hurt someone out of self-defense, but hopefully you can do it in such a way as to not kill or mame them.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 11:31 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

What is "atruism"? Putting others first always? That would certainly not be Epicurean. What is "hedonism?" Putting pleasure first always? Yes, from a certain perspective, but

absolutely no from a moment to moment perspective, because we often choose pain to avoid worse pain or pursue greater pleasure.

I heard it said that even Mother Teresa, who was the famous Catholic nun, who dedicated her life to altruism in the slums of Calcutta, was doing it because she was deriving some pleasure from it. I would guess that she was more focused on the mental pleasure of it than the physical pleasure. (Did she learn to enjoy it out of some kind of "Christian duty"?...hard to say).The danger comes when people think...oh, everyone should be like Mother Teresa. Everyone has differencing personalities and preferences and different ways of enjoying the world. I myself have never felt any calling to do volunteer or non-profit work, and I think it is because I am very introverted and those kinds of situations would cause me a lot of mental stress. However, I can imagine a very extroverted person finding a lot of joy in doing some altruistic work because of some aspect of it that gives them mental pleasure.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 11:40 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

love" isn't the ultimate value in the Epicurean worldview, so has to be treated with caution too. 😊 As you observed smoothkiwi in another recent thread, not every example of prudent eating is Epicurean. Not every instance of "common sense" is Epicurean, and by similar token not every instance of love, or even of pleasure, is something that Epicurus advised everyone to engage in all the time.

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So this makes Epicureanism quite difficult to teach. And only certain people will be able to grasp this big picture understanding of Epicureanism, and that there are no "black and white" absolutes. You have to be able to think for yourself, judge for yourself, and make decisions for yourself.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 11:45 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

And only certain people will be able to grasp this big picture understanding of Epicureanism,

Exactly that seems to be contemplated in several sections of the texts, not the least of which is the Diogenes Laertius [section translated as:](#)

Quote

A man cannot become wise with every kind of physical constitution, nor in every nation.

As well as in Torquatus' statement:

Quote

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; inasmuch that they appear proper subjects for restraint rather than for reformation.

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 14, 2022 at 11:55 AM

Quote

[Nate](#), when I read your lines, I thought to myself "that's what attracts me to Christianity!" Because it really sounds like a lot of fun (and pleasure 😊)- to meet up with like-minded friends, discuss philosophical issues and generally enjoying a day off. And I found myself asking: "What if I can have the same, but without the religious doctrines on it?" It sounds like a dream to me! Even so, wouldn't it make sense to adapt the Christian worldview- at least partly- in order to experience this pleasure, or will it have more pain in the long run?

Most American Christians cannot identify Clement of Alexandria. You'd have a better time as an intellectual Christian discussing Christian theology in a secular philosophy classroom with other students than at local Bible study. Your average Christian reads at an 8th-grade level and have absolutely no interest "discussing philosophical ideas", especially whenever those ideas pose a challenge to the stability of their "like-minded" social environment.

Quote

That's a shame :(. But why are there then so many adult Christians?

There are so many Christian adults for the same reason there are so many Muslim adults in Iraq and Communist adults in China. Religious affiliation is a reflection of one's social environment. My thesis is that the form of "religion" that is mostly practiced by American Christians (specifically) is a social phenomenon, not an intellectual one.

Post by "smoothiekiwi" of January 14, 2022 at 12:06 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

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Really? Well, my view is very influenced by the family of a pastor, who certainly has thought a lot about philosophical concepts. But the average Christian probably isn't like that.

[Quote from Nate](#)

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Makes sense.

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of May 5, 2022 at 5:53 PM

This topic is something I struggle with till this day... I was raised catholic and have gone back forth from catholicism to epicurean philosophy many times...I was even a catholic monk for a short time.

There is a reason PD1 is so important. Anyway I don't have much to add but I know the feeling of a religion feeling inescapable...I believe [Cassius](#) may have similar experience if I recall from previous conversation years ago now..

Post by “Matt” of May 6, 2022 at 6:05 PM

For me it was difficult as well... I had multiple times where I reverted back. But the reality is now (in my opinion) the world reflects the naturalistic ideas of Epicureanism. I don't see miracles, I don't see angels, I don't see the righteous and pious being rewarded and the sinners being punished. When someone says “God blessed me” for saving me from disaster, but simultaneously allows someone else to have tragedy, the answer is always its all in God's plan. I just don't see any of that. It takes years to undo what has been put in our minds....

And I don't take this lightly, I know it's powerful. It can cause a person to abandon friends, forsake family and allow some terrible folks to justify their really terrible behavior with “greasy grace”... even if I sin I am always forgiven, bought and paid for. It's the ultimate lack of accountability with no warranty.