

# Epicureanism Vs Asceticism

Post by "Hiram" of March 12, 2019 at 9:44 AM

[https://www.reddit.com/r/Epicureanism...\\_vs\\_asceticism/](https://www.reddit.com/r/Epicureanism..._vs_asceticism/)

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Post by "Cassius" of March 12, 2019 at 2:24 PM

How depressing to read answers like this:



Post by "Cassius" of March 12, 2019 at 2:31 PM

↑ [-] **cassiusamicus** 1 point 2 minutes ago

↓ Rather than reinforce error by suggesting that it is desirable to live as an ascetic, why not remind him first that Epicurus said: "For I at least do not even know what I should conceive the good to be, if I eliminate the pleasures of taste, and eliminate the pleasures of sex, and eliminate the pleasures of listening, and eliminate the pleasant motions caused in our vision by a visible form." <http://www.attalus.org/translate/epicurus.html>

Also that Epicurus said VS63. "There is also a limit in simple living, and he who fails to understand this falls into an error as great as that of the man who gives way to extravagance." <http://www.epicurus.net/en/vatican.html>

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In case anyone thinks I responded too mildly, I am fighting allergies / pollen season already! 😊

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Post by "bradley.whitley" of March 12, 2019 at 3:19 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/808-epicureanism-vs-asceticism/>

Hello Friends,

I got lost with the Buddhist past life stuff.

Dump Lent. It's superstition. That would be my advice. Just enjoy life. Tomorrow we could be food for the worms. Today! Today! Today! Seek pleasure. Why be ascetic? The Garden was not Ascetic.

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## Post by “Cassius” of March 12, 2019 at 6:33 PM

1 -- Brad, I am sure you can tell I am on a long-term campaign to find and unite the Epicureans of the world who understand Epicurean pleasure positively, and not as a gateway drug to asceticism. There will likely always be a multi-track approach where people are inclined to asceticism consider themselves Epicurean, and some of them can be brought along to a wider understanding of Epicurus. BUT some won't, and when confronted with the "Epicurus meant what he said about pleasure being understandable" attitude, they fall away from "the flock" 😊 So as we proceed down the road please help me keep that in mind and help me, to the extent you can, figure out how to pursue that more productively! 😊

2 -- in the same vein, I reposted my comment over on FB and one of the replies contained such good info about Buddhism that I had to past it here. I'll do it without attribution since the person isn't a member here (as far as I know):

*"Depressing is right! The person who was discussing Buddhist meditation, asceticism, and the achievement of jnana caught my interest. I studied the Buddhist teachings that he references for years, and though I meditated daily, I never went on intensive meditation retreats where a person might be able to finally reach those meditative states. I felt like a bad Buddhist because I had no desire to give up some of my pleasures and attend retreats where I might attain those states that the Buddha talked about. Eventually I began to question the worldview of Buddhism, and the practice of meditation, and I gave up my study and practice. The teachings of Epicurus, I've been happy to discover, affirms the world, our place in it, and our desires for pleasure in a positive way.*

*In Buddhism tanha (which translates as thirst, desire, longing and craving) is what leads to suffering (dukkha). We are taught that desire for sensual pleasures can never satisfy us, and we are to aim for the state of equanimity, where we neither grasp pleasure or push away unpleasantness. People like to think of Buddhism as a philosophy of becoming one with everything, but actually the Buddha's teachings, as recorded in the earliest form of the Pali Canon, were only for those who had renounced the world and become ascetics. Laypeople were*

to make merit by providing everything that the monks and nuns needed so that they could spend their time meditating as much as possible. If the laypeople spent their lives doing good in this way, perhaps in the next life they could become monks or nuns themselves and strive to reach enlightenment. I cannot see any way that Buddhism and the teachings of Epicurus can be harmonized, though sometimes people try to do so.

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## Post by “michelepinto” of March 14, 2019 at 11:59 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

How depressing to read answers like this:



I do not understand: why depressing? Is like what Epicurus said in Menoecus letter:  
*"Again, we regard independence of outward things as a great good, not so as in all cases to use little, but so as to be contented with little if we have not much, being honestly persuaded that they have the sweetest enjoyment of luxury who stand least in need of it, and that whatever is natural is easily procured and only the vain and worthless hard to win. Plain fare gives as much pleasure as a costly diet, when once the pain of want has been removed, while bread and water confer the highest possible pleasure when they are brought to hungry lips."*

Of course the Epicurus lifestyle is not ascetic. Asceticism is not the goal of Epicurus, and - more important - Epicurus is not dogmatic about that. But there is a lot of similar.

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## Post by “Cassius” of March 14, 2019 at 1:00 PM

Yes I agree, but I think this is an issue that I think is very important. I know that we all observe the emphasis on materialism in most people, and we see that they need to understand that it would be more efficient for their long-term happiness to put aside the materialism.

But among those of us who talk about Epicurus and understand at least the basics of the philosophy, I think we can also observe the reverse error, of thinking that living for simplicity is an end in itself. They take their eye off pleasure as the goal just as much as if they were

pursuing pleasure in any other way incorrectly.

And I observe something else: that those people who seem to focus on simplicity also seem to combine simplicity with a passive attitude of resignation about what goes on in the rest of their lives and the world. Renunciation of materialism quickly seems to turn into renunciation of all social life and interaction with others. How else to explain the seeming passivity of people who like Epicurus but who seem to accept the idea that Stoicism is just another way to happiness?

We may agree with the stoics that living simply makes sense, but we do it so that we can remain independent of outside forces that would destroy our chance to live as we like and pursue happiness as we like. We aren't running from emotion like the stoics - we are embracing emotions that make us happy and pursuing the joy of life while we are alive - which is our only chance.

Your general point is of course correct, Michele, but I think that Epicurus must have sensed the same concern I have for him to have come up with the statement [VS63](#) "63. There is also a limit in simple living, and he who fails to understand this falls into an error as great as that of the man who gives way to extravagance."

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### **Post by “michelepinto” of March 14, 2019 at 1:15 PM**

We agree completely.

Recently I listened an "imaginary interview" with Epicurus on Italian Radio (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GYXtRv1eE8>). The actor who was interpreting Epicurus said that all the misunderstanding about his hedonism was good because it had attracted a lot of people to his doctrine.

(I know my English is horrible.. forgive me!)

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### **Post by “Cassius” of March 14, 2019 at 1:37 PM**

Your English seems very good -- very much more than adequate! And thanks for the link.