
Epicurus

Epicurus founded a community in Athens called “the Garden”. Men and women, free persons, and slaves, were all equal.

He claimed that the goal of philosophy was to provide a guide to living well. In this, he was in agreement with Socrates and Plato. However, he offered a particular view as to what made a life well lived.

According to Epicurus, one should maximize pleasures and minimize pains. You should accept pains that lead to greater pleasures. You should reject pleasures that lead to greater pains.

Death

“For there is nothing terrible in life for the man who has truly comprehended that there is nothing terrible in not living.” 1. Nothing is good or bad for one except sense experience, i.e. feelings of pleasure and pain. 2. The dead don’t have any sense experiences. 3. Therefore nothing is good or bad for the one who is dead. 4. Therefore the state of being dead is not (good or) bad for the one who is dead. 5. If x is not bad for one when it is present, then there is no rational ground, before it is present, to fear its future presence. 6. Therefore no living person has any rational ground to fear his future state of being dead.

Problem comes from fearing/anticipating death. Not from death itself.

Death is deprivation of sensation, therefore a deprivation of something good. Understanding death makes life enjoyable because it takes away the craving for immortality.

Distinguish the pain of death vs. the pain of anticipating death.

Letter to Menoeceus. Maybe have someone read aloud the first paragraph.

Ethics###Epicurean Hedonism (hêdonê = pleasure):1. Eudaimonist framework2. Happiness = ataraxia, freedom from disturbance:

“The unwavering contemplation of these [distinctions among desires] enables one to refer every choice and avoidance to the health of the body and the freedom of the soul from disturbance [ataraxia], since this is the goal of the blessed life”.

Pleasure

- Static/katastematic pleasure consists in the absence of pain, want and desire, e.g., freedom from hunger, thirst. + Kinetic pleasures: always involve a change in one's psychic state, valuable as a means to achieving static pleasure (e.g., quenching one's thirst).
- ataraxia consists in static pleasure, understood as the absence of pain (33, 60).
- Adaptive conception of happiness: ataraxia achieved by (1) satisfying desires, (2) eliminating them. Thus, in order to be happy, one ought to change desires so that one only wants things that are easy to get. **Types of Desire**

Because of the close connection of pleasure with desire-satisfaction, Epicurus devotes a considerable part of his ethics to analyzing different kinds of desires. If pleasure results from getting what you want (desire-satisfaction) and pain from not getting what you want (desire-frustration), then there are two strategies you can pursue with respect to any given desire: you can either strive to fulfill the desire, or you can try to eliminate the desire. For the most part Epicurus advocates the second strategy, that of paring your desires down to a minimum core, which are then easily satisfied.

Epicurus distinguishes between three types of desires:

- natural and necessary desires:
 - Examples of natural and necessary desires include the desires for food, shelter, and the like.
 - These desires are easy to satisfy, difficult to eliminate (they are 'hard-wired' into human beings naturally), and bring great pleasure when satisfied.
 - Furthermore, they are necessary for life, and they are naturally limited: that is, if one is hungry, it only takes a limited amount of food to fill the stomach, after which the desire is satisfied.
 - Epicurus says that one should try to fulfill these desires.
- natural but non-necessary desire:
 - An example of a natural but non-necessary desire is the desire for luxury food. Although food is needed for survival, one does not need a particular type of food to survive.
 - Thus, despite his hedonism, Epicurus advocates a surprisingly ascetic way of life. Although one shouldn't spurn extravagant foods if they happen to be available, becoming dependent on such goods ultimately leads to unhappiness.
 - As Epicurus puts it, "If you wish to make Pythocles wealthy, don't give him more money; rather, reduce his desires."

- By eliminating the pain caused by unfulfilled desires, and the anxiety that occurs because of the fear that one's desires will not be fulfilled in the future, the wise Epicurean attains tranquility, and thus happiness.
- vain and empty desires:
 - Vain desires include desires for power, wealth, fame, and the like.
 - They are difficult to satisfy, in part because they have no natural limit. If one desires wealth or power, no matter how much one gets, it is always possible to get more, and the more one gets, the more one wants.
 - These desires are not natural to human beings, but inculcated by society and by false beliefs about what we need; e.g., believing that having power will bring us security from others.
 - Epicurus thinks that these desires should be eliminated.