

Review of the "What is Epicureanism and Is It Compatible with Stoicism?" video by Vox Stoica

Post by "Cassius" of August 7, 2021 at 4:11 PM

This is a good question and -- without trying to open a can of political worms that would contradict one of our other core principles here at the forum - this is a point that we discussed back when we were developing the "Not NeoEpicurean But Epicurean" graphic and statement for the forum itself: [Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean](#)

I believe we discussed this in one or more Lucretius Today episodes, and I think we have some longer posts on this here and at facebook. I remember Elayne having some very pointed things on this position with which I agreed as well. It's also very possibly included in the lengthy thread we had about [the proposed statement of principles of the Society of Epicurus](#). I will compile some links and supplement this post but in the meantime I will summarize by saying that: most definitions of humanism appear to be consistent with this page by the [American Society of Humanists](#). Among the key aspects of that are statements like this:

Quote

Definition of Humanism

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism or other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good.

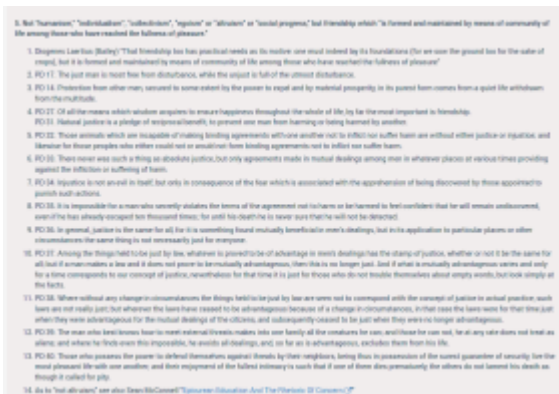
- *American Humanist Association*

Terms like "progressive," "ethical lives," "responsibility," "personal fulfillment," and "greater good" point to the unifying aspect of Humanism being an essentially idealist or even political movement which asserts a "best" way of life for all men, which would contradict Epicurus's view of the universe in which there is no natural basis for such an assertion. One of the most clear statements of this conclusion comes in the final ten [principal doctrines](#) that maintain that there is no such thing as absolute justice.

I think it's pretty clear from many popular articles that Stoicism is, like humanism, a philosophy that asserts that there is a "greater good" which can be stated in absolute moral terms (virtue) that is the same for all people. Now of course many humanists will disagree with many Stoics as to how the "greater good" should be defined, but that simply points out the commonality further -- their unifying aspect is that they agree that there is a "one size fits all" morality and virtue. I would argue that Epicurus would reply that there is no standard of judgment at all other than pleasure and pain.

Maybe an even shorter way to capsulize the issue would be to say that there is a strong case to be made that most versions of "humanism" are in essence a form of "idealism" not so far at all from "Platonism.". And that commonality helps draw the parallel between humanism and Stoicism.

This is how we stated it in the original Not-NeoEpicurean graphic:



Additional references:

The first links one may be among the best:

Thread

[Epicurean Philosophy Vs. Humanism](#)

I have never considered Epicurean philosophy to be a form of "Humanist" philosophy any more than it is a form of Stoicism or Platonism. I haven't written extensively on this, in part because many Humanists are allies on certain important points, such as rejection of Supernatural Religion.

But I was reminded of this point today and I think it is time to start a thread on it. My position is that "Humanism" is just another "-ism" that has a goal at its center which is very different from...



Cassius

May 27, 2019 at 3:48 PM

Thread

[A Pattern I Observe In The Connection \(Or Lack Thereof\) Between Humanism And Epicurean Philosophy](#)

My goal in the discussion of "Humanism" has been to generate "light" rather than "heat," but since the goal of life is "light" (pleasure), and not the avoidance of "heat" (pain), I have more to

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2138-review-of-the-what-is-epicureanism-and-is-it-compatible-with-stoicism-video-by-v/?postID=13147#post13147>

add. The accompanying graphic is not a "proof" of anything. It is simply a summary of my observation, over many years, of a common thread that binds what I find to be the majority view of "Humanism" to what I find to be a popular but flawed view of Epicurus.

The text on the left is from an article that...



Cassius

May 30, 2019 at 8:17 PM

Post

[RE: Why Does Stoicism Seem to Be More Popular Than Epicureanism, Especially In England?](#)

Yes that wikipedia article goes into what I would expect the issue to be: What does "positive" mean? Why use the word "positive" rather than 'pleasure'? Do they resolve "positive" as meaning things beyond pleasure? And yes according to this they head right back into the "virtue ethics" issues that seem to characterize humanism. And to these extent these categories are accepted as ends in themselves, this would definitely appear to be an Aristotelian, rather than Epicurean, approach:



Cassius

October 3, 2020 at 5:05 PM

Post

[Elayne Reviews Alan Reye's Editorial on Thomas Jefferson](#)

Elayne has undertaken an Augean Stables (not sure that is the correct analogy) of reviewing Alan Reyes' article on Thomas Jefferson. I don't personally share Elayne's feelings about Jefferson, but I think her thoughtful discussion of all the issues is well worth reading and does a great job of unwinding much confusion about Epicurus' views on virtue and justice.

I presume that at some point we will get a version of it here at Epicureanfriends.com, but I also see that it is unique exchange with...



Cassius

October 11, 2020 at 3:27 PM

Outside Article: [Nietzsche's Overcoming of Humanism](#)

Wikipedia: - Section on ["Criticisms of Humanism"](#) I suspect that wikipedia article is subject to a lot of changes, so here is how it appeared back in 2019: [RE: Epicurean Philosophy Vs.](#)

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2138-review-of-the-what-is-epicureanism-and-is-it-compatible-with-stoicism-video-by-v/?postID=13147#post13147>

Humanism

This post has a PDF attached to it which preserves some of the Facebook exchange - [RE: Epicurean Philosophy Vs. Humanism](#)