

# Differences between Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism

Post by "Kalosyni" of October 30, 2021 at 7:51 PM

This might bring up some ideas for consideration and further exploration of the differences between the teachings of Epicurus and Aristippus.

The following paragraphs are quoted from:

[Epicurus | | Mt. San Antonio College](#)

## Quote

"In opposition to Aristippus, Epicurus maintains that the duration of pleasures is more important than their intensity in achieving happiness. Consequently, he argues that the mental pleasures are in general superior to the physical pleasures, because they are longer-lasting, albeit less intense. Although he finds the physical pleasures unobjectionable in themselves, he contends that the pursuit of them for their own sake leads not to happiness but to its opposite. Experience shows us that the desire for a life filled with intense pleasures will be frustrated, because there are not enough of them in the ordinary course of events. What is more, the pleasures derived from such objectives as fame, wealth, and the like are usually outweighed by the pains necessary to procure them, and the pains consequent upon such activities as feasting, drinking, and merrymaking either cancel the pleasures or leave a balance of pain. From these considerations, Epicurus can only conclude that Aristippus' standard of judging what is good - that is, "the most intense, sensual pleasure of the moment" - is entirely self-defeating."

"The chief difference between Cyrenaicism and Epicureanism lies in their divergent conception of the nature of true pleasure. Fundamental to their disagreement is the distinction between active or positive pleasure, which comes from the gratification of specific wants and desires, and passive or negative pleasure, which is the absence of pain. Aristippus sets as the goal of life a constant round of active pleasures, whereas Epicurus maintains that the active pleasures are important only insofar as they terminate the pain of unfulfilled desires. For Epicurus, the passive pleasures are more fundamental than the active, because it is through them that happiness is gained. A human being's ultimate goal is not a constant succession of intense sensual pleasures, but is rather the state of serenity, *ataraxia*, characterized by "freedom from trouble in the mind and pain in the body."

"Epicurus assures us that the calm and repose of the good life are within the reach of all. It is necessary that we keep our desires at a minimum, however, and distinguish the

natural and necessary desires from those that are artificial - for example, longings for wealth, excitement, fame, and power. The latter are not merely unnecessary to health and tranquility but are in fact destructive of them. By contrast, the satisfaction of the natural desires (the desires that must be fulfilled to preserve bodily health and mental peace) and the freedom from pain that accompanies such satisfaction lead to happiness."

"Epicurus tells us that our good can be realized through philosophy, the quest for knowledge. It must be understood, however, that the function of philosophy is preeminently practical:

Vain is the world of a philosopher which does not heal any suffering of man. For justis there is no profit in medicine if it does not expel the diseases of the body, so here is no profit in philosophy either, if it does not expel the suffering of the mind."

"By nature men seek pleasure, but by knowledge they are guided to the choice of the true pleasures. Without deliberation, we cannot hope either to forestall needless and artificial desires or to secure the pleasures required for happiness. In addition, without knowledge of the nature of things, we cannot rid ourselves of the fears and superstitions that destroy tranquility."

Display More