

Compassion in Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Scott" of February 7, 2022 at 11:33 PM

Thanks, [Don](#), and [Joshua](#) thanks for all the citations! Great work digging all that up! There is plenty to indicate the kindness of Epicurus and that of EP as a philosophy in general, perhaps especially from Diogenes of Oenoanda. Kindness and benevolence, love and help, etc. All good stuff. But I was pondering this and it occurred to me there is still something a little "different" about compassion than what we find in these citations. Some flavor. I did some etymology work on it (e.g. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/compassion>).

Then I took the dog for a walk, and it struck me. Compassion deals with **suffering**. It **calls** for suffering. Pretty much **requires** it. That seems obvious to me in hindsight. That's what really differentiates it from benevolence and love and help and such.

So then I thought... Buddhism, which has been a long time influence in my life, has "suffering" as a seminal concept, as we all know. And would it be any surprise then that compassion is likewise a Buddhist primary motif, which it is, especially from the Dalai Lama and other Mahayana versions, but to greater or lesser extent it pops up in most of the strands of Buddhism. Suffering is also a big deal in Christianity. The passion of Christ, etc. Perhaps Epicureanism just didn't and doesn't have suffering as such a center piece. Although certainly aware of it and concerned to address what we generally find translated as "pain" in EP materials, is it not simply the case that Epicurus put the positive in front, not the negative? His focus was more on pleasure, not on escaping pain, right?