

Epicureanism Vs Asceticism

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.