

# Comparing "the goal" for various ancient Greek philosophies

**Post by "Little Rocker" of June 1, 2023 at 2:48 PM**

Here's my take on a few of them. These are all essentially eudaimonist theories, so the goal is always some form of happiness, excepting perhaps some of the Cyrenaics.

Plato (at least in key dialogues) maintains that (complete?) happiness requires knowledge of the Form of the Good, which a philosopher achieves chiefly by means of 'dialectic,' which itself requires a bedrock educational program starting from childhood that includes music, physical education, military training, administrative work, and various other forms of mathematics and theoretical study.

Aristotle: (complete?) happiness is manifested in a life of virtuous activity. Virtue consists in a 'mean' between extremes of vice (e.g., courage lies in the mean between cowardice and rashness), and the virtuous person consistently 'hits the mean' that is 'relative to them' (i.e. everyone's mean is not the same). The virtuous person has a stable character, so they do the right thing, for the right reasons, for its own sake, taking pleasure in the activity across a wide variety of circumstances.

Pyrrhonism-- tranquility (ataraxia) that follows the 'suspension of judgment' about all theoretical and practical questions. Methodologically, you take up a question (e.g., is there motion?) and marshal the best arguments for and against, decide neither position is better than the other (i.e. establish equipollence), then suspend judgment. Magically, tranquility follows the suspension.

Stoicism--this one is pretty difficult, but they definitely think happiness is virtue (in fact, virtue is the only good thing), when virtue is something like a coherent set of true beliefs about nature and value.