

# Comparing "the goal" for various ancient Greek philosophies

Post by "Kalosyni" of June 1, 2023 at 2:19 PM

It is possible we already have a chart for this but just for fun I am making this one, and will add in more details soon.

## Chart comparing the goal for the various ancient Greek philosophies

<u>Philosophy</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Methods used to achieve the goal</u>
Epicureanism	"The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain. What possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable?" ( <a href="#">Source</a> )	
Cyrenicism		
Platonism		
Aristotelianism		
Stoicism		
Cynicism	The goal of life is eudaimonia and mental clarity or lucidity (ἀτυφία)—literally "freedom from smoke (τύφος)" which signified false belief, mindlessness, folly, and conceit. ( <a href="#">Wikipedia</a> )	
Pyrrhonism	Most sources agree that the primary goal of Pyrrho's philosophy was the achievement of a state of <a href="#">ataraxia</a> , or freedom from mental perturbation, and that he observed that ataraxia could be brought about by eschewing beliefs ( <a href="#">dogma</a> ) about thoughts and perceptions. However, Pyrrho's own philosophy may have differed significantly in details from later Pyrrhonism. ( <a href="#">Wikipedia</a> )	

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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.

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### **Post by “stpeter” of June 3, 2023 at 9:18 PM**

Because I'm writing a book on Aristotle's conception of human fulfillment (in the same series as my books on Epicurus, Thoreau, Nietzsche, and Rand), I have opinions about the Aristotelian category. 😊 After a great deal of research and reflection, I see Aristotle's ethics as very much influenced by his foundational work in biology. His idea of "virtue" is not free-floating like that of Christianity or Kantianism, but derives from his views about human nature and society - about what it means to thrive as a human being. The full treatment will be forthcoming in my book, provisionally entitled [Complete Thyself](#).

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### **Post by “stpeter” of June 3, 2023 at 9:20 PM**

P.S. I also plan to write a novel about Pyrrho. 😊

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### **Post by “Cassius” of June 4, 2023 at 7:54 AM**

I wish you good health and quick writing with all those books in the hopper! Please don't save Epicurus for last! 😊

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### **Post by “stpeter” of June 4, 2023 at 11:12 AM**

Thanks, [Cassius](#) ... as you know, I've already written an epistolary dialogue on Epicurus entitled [Letters on Happiness](#), although I am also slowly working on a more complete translation of his writings on how to live. Too many projects. 😊

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### **Post by “Onenski” of June 7, 2023 at 6:19 PM**

Hi, [Kalosyni](#) .

In the case of Epicureanism I think that the goal can be reached with the help of these resources:

- \* Reflection on epicurean arguments (reading and remembering epicurean letters, for example). Especially, the fact that pleasure is the beginning and end of a happy life.
- \* Memorization of [principal doctrines](#) in order to have the arguments present in daily life.
- \* As a way of moral reminders: portraits, rings or cups with the picture of Epicurus. The idea is to remember the practice of pleasure. (In the case of the statue, the divine Epicurus remembers the divine character of those who live pleasantly).
- \* Friendship and frank criticism for the correction in the practice of Epicureanism.
- \* Remember good moments in life (as Austin recommends): every day, or whenever we are bored or we are suffering.

For Aristotle:

\* Musical education (this is part of an educational plan in *Politics* VII). My interpretation is that music reproduces passions, and if we get used to moderate passions, then we are prone to moderation in passions and actions.

\* Habituation (a frequent and directed practice of every virtue with the help of a teacher or any guidance). (*NE*, II.9)

\* Appreciation of tragic plays (this can increase moral understanding of human circumstances and decision making). (*Poetics*)

\* Friendship: a virtuous friend can help in developing virtue or correcting vices. (*NE* VIII and IX)

In both cases (and I dare to say that in all cases) the most important it's a personal engagement in the conception of the goal of life.