

Defining and Summarizing Epicurean Ethics

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 18, 2025 at 8:40 AM

I've been wondering if it is possible to summarize Epicurean ethics into shorter statements, in much the same manner as DeWitt came up with 12 points of natural physics.

But the mental world is different than the physical world -- you can point to physical objects and observe their behavior, but you can't physically point to internal states of pleasure and pain since they are internal and subjective.

And I am wondering if this is possible to do for Epicurean ethics, but because of word usage such as "pleasure" "gods" etc. it would be difficult to do. Much of ethics can't be boiled down to single short phrases without introducing ambiguities and the attempt to do so has been the origin of incorrect interpretations (such incorrect interpretations as ataraxia being more important than eudaimonia) -- one error in reasoning causes incorrect conclusions.

Perhaps one way to deal with this could be similar to how in our time we have legal documents which often have a long list of word definitions given before the main part of the legal explanation.

Also we need to have all the text on ethics layed out and then work toward creating the list.

[Cassius](#) has already done much on this in introductory material and videos, yet I believe that there are some points which haven't been added yet, and also I'd like to see them said in a more direct (simple) manner.

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 18, 2025 at 9:55 AM

Here is an example of what I am thinking regarding definitions, however these could depend on subjective understanding of Epicurean ethics. This just a starting point, as I will have more. Then after the definitions, the summarized principals could follow.

I do see that this could create debate, as everyone uses words differently, so very subjective...but will give it a try anyway. 😊 (These will likely be subject to change as I develop this further).

pleasure - both physical and mental enjoyment of "all of life".

all of life - past, present, and future.

eudaimonia - well-being; and the same as the enjoyment of all of life.

the highest pleasures - contain no pain and do not lead to future painful states.

variation of sensation - a type of temporary physical pleasure that occurs after pains of the body are removed.

Post by "Eikadistes" of December 18, 2025 at 2:19 PM

I'm fond of our *Golden Rule*, which might be a candidate (KD32):

μη βλάπτειν μηδὲ βλάπτεσθαι

neither **harm** nor **be harmed**

Though, that's just the formula for *justice*. The formula for an ethics of pleasure also includes being "*noble*" and "*prudent*", in addition to being "*just*" (KD5). At least, KD32 is a nice line I like to dispense.

Post by "Kalosyni" of December 18, 2025 at 2:46 PM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

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Thanks! ...all of that needs to be included in a list of Epicurean ethics.

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 18, 2025 at 3:10 PM

Also, adding in from Usener fragments...

48. It is better for you to be free of fear lying upon a pallet, than to have a golden couch and a rich table and be full of trouble.

Which could be shortened to: -----> A calm mind free from disturbance is more valuable than external riches.