

Differences between Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism

Post by "Cassius" of October 31, 2021 at 1:47 AM

The way the quote system works these look like quotes from Kalosyni but of course they are from the article. {Note - I edited the post and now these quotes just say "Quote"} Kalosyni has found a good article for displaying in condensed form many of what I consider to be the worst and most inaccurate takes on Epicurean philosophy.

For example I think each if the following assertions is factually untrue - and not even close to correct. These are the "neo stoic" views which make the version of Epicurean philosophy presented here - if it were true - not worth the paper it's written on:

Quote

Epicurus maintains that the duration of pleasures is more important than their intensity in achieving happiness.

I suspect he is mainly referring there to the section by Torquatus in "on Ends" which says that mental pleasures can be more significant than bodily pleasures because they can last longer, but he does not say that is necessarily so, nor does he say that duration is more important than intensity. There are passages that say the opposite, including the letter to Menoecus where he specifically says we do not choose the longest, but the most pleasant.

Quote

Epicurus maintains that the active pleasures are important only insofar as they terminate the pain of unfulfilled desires. For Epicurus, the passive pleasures are more fundamental

That is the katestematic/kinetic assertion that is contained only one place in Dlogenes Laertius, in a place that does not say that katestematic is more important. The place to start reading on this is Boris [Nikolsky](#) 's article Epicurus on Pleasure.

Quote

Epicurus assures us that the calm and repose of the good life are within the reach of all

Overbroad. He specifically says that the study of nature is required and that not everyone is constitutionally disposed towards wisdom. But the implication here that the "good life" is easily within reach should not be taken to mean that you can do or be whatever you want and still attain a good life.

Quote

It is necessary that we keep our desires at a minimum, however

This is pure asceticism and would go even further even than do the Stoics to destroy human life -- if it were truly what he taught, but it is not. Every aspect of Epicurean philosophy is geared toward focusing on pleasure as the goal, not at "keeping our desires at a minimum" as a goal. [VS63](#), which is rarely if ever quoted by people who make this quoted assertion, specifically says:

[VS63](#). Frugality too has a limit, and the man who disregards it is like him who errs through excess.

Were these quotes an accurate summary I would consider this philosophy to be worse than Stoicism - which would be quite a feat. I won't go into each of them here beyond what I wrote above, but we can take each in turn in greater detail if anyone would like. Probably the better place for most of those would however be in the forum [Epicurean Philosophy vs. Stoicism](#)

In regard to Sedley I too hold him in high regard. The main difference I see between Sedley and DeWitt is that Sedley writes to an academic audience and he doesn't make it his goal to write to average readers and to disabuse them of the ideas presented in the quoted-from article. That's what DeWitt does.

If not for DeWitt I myself might well have accepted the quoted-from "stoic lite" view of Epicurus, and none of us would be having this conversation here because I would have rejected Epicurus with great prejudice and this website would not be here.

None of these comments are aimed at Katosyni of course because what she has done in posting this is do us the favor of reminding us (as we need to be reminded constantly!) What is out there and what we are up against in trying to understand [classical Epicurean philosophy](#).

So Kalosyni please ask specifically about any of these quoted sections you think may be accurate and we can go through the evidence against them.