

# 2022 Epicurus vs Buddhism Compare and Contrast Thread

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 28, 2022 at 12:23 AM

Here is my understanding of Buddhism, based on my study and practice:

I think that for many people who go into the study and practice of Buddhism, they are unhappy and they hope to find an answer as to what to do to have a better life. So Buddhism looks at what is causing the suffering, the "dukkha", in life.

From the Pali Sutta, ancient text:

Quote

"[Birth](#) is dukkha, [aging](#) is dukkha, [death](#) is dukkha; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair are dukkha; association with the unloved is dukkha; separation from the loved is dukkha; not getting what is wanted is dukkha. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are dukkha."

— [SN 56.11](#)

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sac...ca1/dukkha.html>

And they say that the suffering is due to clinging to unrealistic expectations...and then they say why do people cling? ...because they crave, and why do they crave? ...because they have greed.

The unrealistic expectations are that they want to hold onto things, or that they wish to permanently possess the things that they want, but actually the nature of everything is impermanence, and there is nothing that can be held onto. And then when unpleasant things happen, the urge to resist them and the feeling of aversion or anger arises, but things like being subjected to unpleasant things, and old age, sickness, and death are all inevitable.

So through the disciplined practice of meditation, within Zen Buddhism, they practice "letting go"...and "choiceless awareness"... "not picking or choosing" and also come to "realize" the "true nature of everything" which is "emptiness". And they practice by simplifying one's life and cultivating and practicing Buddhist virtues...the Buddhist precepts and the paramitas (perfections)...

Zen paramitas:

Quote

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2362-2022-epicurus-vs-buddhism-compare-and-contrast-thread/?postID=16287#post16287>

The six are (1) generosity (dāna), (2) morality (śīla), (3) patience (kṣānti), (4) vigor (vīrya), (5) concentration (dhyāna), and (6) wisdom (prajñā).

## Zen Buddhist Precepts:

### Quote

#### The Three Refuges

- I take refuge in the Buddha (the source of the teaching)
- I take refuge in the Dharma (the Buddha's teaching)
- I take refuge in the Sangha (those who practise the teaching)

#### The Three Pure Precepts

- Cease from evil. By refraining from that which causes confusion and suffering, the truth will shine of itself
- Do only good. Doing good arises naturally when we cease from evil
- Do good for others. To train in Zen is to devote one's life to the good of all living things

#### The Ten Precepts

- Do not take life
- Do not steal
- Do not indulge in abusive or inappropriate sexuality
- Do not lie
- Do not abuse intoxicants
- Do not criticize others
- Do not boast of your attainments and belittle others
- Do not be mean [stingy] in giving Dharma (teaching) or wealth
- Do not harbour anger
- Do not defame the three treasures (do not deny the Buddha within yourself or in others)

<https://zenways.org/take-the-zen-precepts/>

And for Buddhist "emptiness" there are different ways of explaining this...there is no inner and no outer, there is no center and no edge. All things are empty of intrinsic existence and nature. As for nihilism...this can come from the teaching of "no self" which is the understanding that there is no fixed innate "inner self" because the self arises dependent on many causes and conditions which are in flux.

I think that this understanding of the "no self" can lead to problems. It can lead to a quiet acquiescence in which a person engages with the world in a very passive way. This may work in the communal life of a Zen monastery, but doesn't translate well for the modern Western lifestyle. And then this could lead to a sense of "giving up" on life, for people who are introverted and lack social skills and lack adequate social connections.

So to answer a question that [Cassius](#) asked in the very first post...Yes, I think Buddhism leads people to cultivate passivity.

The understanding of pleasure in Buddhism is that it should not be "relied upon", because it is impermanent and ephemeral and therefore it will always lead to more suffering, because try as you might you just can't "hold onto" pleasure.

So.....now to contrast Buddhism with Epicureanism....

The antidote to all the unhealthy passivity of Buddhism....is Epicureanism!

For me....first it is important to understand what the natural and necessary pleasures of life are...and getting clear on what those are...then diligently (and patiently) working toward getting those pleasures. This is my list:

- 1) eating healthy food
- 2) an adequate place to live
- 3) good sleep
- 4) some form of regular exercise
- 5) making and maintaining good friendships (could include a life partner)
- 6) study of Epicurean wisdom philosophy
- 7) right type of career/job/craft

And...also there is the experience of pleasureable sensations and pleasureable memories, and yet the basics of one's life is a priority and is also the place where the all the sensory enjoyments arise.

Also...there is the anticipation that the basic pleasures will always be there to enjoy. For example, there is ample food to eat and so the pleasure of eating will continually occur every day. There is no need to over-eat, because in a few hours I will be hungry again and can enjoy eating all over again...which also means that there is a way to interact with food so as to bring the most pleasure...eat in a beautiful way...slowly/enjoyably and with pleasureable respect for the food.