

2022 Epicurus vs Buddhism Compare and Contrast Thread

Post by "Scott" of January 28, 2022 at 1:48 PM

First, the disclaimer:

I have great hesitation even posting in this thread. This should probably be 12 different threads. There is so much here to take on. Let me start with - like it or not - there are **very many** understandings of Buddhism, many of which directly contradict each other, and we have NO written version of what the Buddha said. We all know how difficult it is to make sense of a philosophy that has been written down, especially over years by different authors, passing through translations by different peeps in history, through various languages old and modern - now just imagine that with no certain starting point. At all. They started writing the Buddha's words down probably around 3-400 years after the Buddha had died and one could argue they are essentially still adding to the canon - there is no "revealed" or "authentic" truth / version by a god or an Epicurus or other religious leader or philosopher (of course various sects claim various parts of the canon as authoritative).

Now I'm sure some or many concepts actually presented by the Buddha managed to be maintained with some degree of correctness, and still exist in the writings we have. But it's impossible to nail this down. Again - like it or not, this is what we got.

The Buddhist common disclaimer is "oh, people at that time had great memory capabilities and they were verbally able to pass down the teachings reliably". Really? I'm calling baloney on that. Some Buddhists will also often say that this flexibility is by design of the Buddha and this is valuable, that there is no determinate path. Each person can fashion a "raft" to get to the other side of the proverbial river, and the Buddha's teachings can help, but you have to fashion your own raft. In Zen they would say the Buddha was like pointing a finger at the moon. Don't get hung up on the finger and keep looking at it - the point is the moon (and of course what the "goal" is suggested by this moon is itself another long topic).

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Don't people who are attracted to it have "some" idea of the basic teachings before they dive into the details? What are those basic attractions that get people started down that path in the first place?

Generally, modern converts to some form of Buddhism encounter one or another flavor of Buddhism (either one of the traditional/regional versions or a more modern variant, or some combination) and they learn their "basics" there.

Often people then dabble in other versions they hear about, though some folks stick with their original.

Many peeps discover "Mindfulness", then find out it came from Buddhism and other ancient Indian traditions and they look up local Buddhist groups in their town and off they go to meditate there.

It's a smorgasbord out there, and one can pick and choose. Today of course we have broad access to all different types of Buddhism in a way that was never even possible a couple of hundred years ago. While there are many shared ideas among different versions and some that certain groups argue are "core" to all Buddhism or most, in reality the ideas criss-cross in complicated ways, and there are also basic, **fundamental, radical** differences between many of the "Buddhisms".

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So if possible I'd like us to work on a thread for "the rest of us" - Epicureans in particular, of course, who want to get an initial grasp of what is fairly referable to as generic Buddhism from a Western perspective. That way we can hopefully get a grasp on at least a couple of core concepts.

I think going after some core concepts is a good idea. My today is really busy, so I apologize I'm going to step away now, after having dumped this out here. I'll try to post some more of my thoughts soon regarding specific concepts, but I just wanted to first throw out this well worn wet blanket in an attempt to maybe cool the flames just a tidge and encourage more focus. "Buddhism" is a bugger to pin down. It's like one of the agents in the Matrix movie. They move fast and they morph. Hard to land a bullet on them.