

2022 Epicurus vs Buddhism Compare and Contrast Thread

Post by “Matt” of January 31, 2022 at 9:03 AM

My concern with this thread is that it seems to want to become ambiguous about the nature of what Buddhism is and why the religion and philosophy came into existence and what specifically it came for. You can't have a cure for something if there isn't something to cure.

I don't believe it is helpful for an Epicurean comparison if we cannot pin down generic qualities that are universally “Buddhist.” Almost as if there are so many disconnected versions of Buddhism with such radically different doctrines that we can't pin them down at all under the coinage of “Buddhism.” I very much disagree with this.

Buddhism is no different than Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Neoplatonism and Stoicism in that we can apprehend and certainly comprehend “what” it's about in generic terms. There is nothing “special” about Buddhist doctrine, Its “various” doctrines can 100% be understood by non-Buddhists who can easily analyze it...if a person believes this isn't the case then most likely they are far more Buddhist than Epicurean.

I totally understand that there may be some subconscious sympathies and deference for the Buddha by some who have experience in it...I get that, but the reality is that Buddhism is not Epicurean Philosophy...it's in fact quite different and often hostile to it. My position is that we as Epicureans need to be able pin down what Buddhism is in generic terms to be able to criticize it and analyze it. Just as someone who may have come from an Islamic background would need to be objective about criticism and analysis of Mohammed and Islam. We are not here to bolster the often fanciful claims of the Buddha or further his philosophy, we are here for Epicurus.

I believe Buddhism to be, among other Indian schools of thought, to address the common “metaphysical” beliefs of karma, reincarnation and the various soteriological ways to be released from this cycle that are native to Indian thought as would be accessible to the “common” uneducated person living in the 5th and 6th century BCE.