

2022 Epicurus vs Buddhism Compare and Contrast Thread

Post by “Cassius” of January 31, 2022 at 12:15 PM

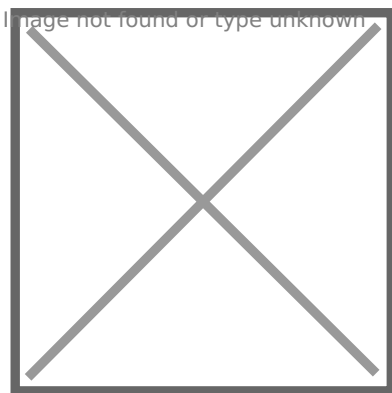
Quote

"I think it's safe to assume that most of us (meaning all humans) are not overly happy people in general. Life allows for some pleasures here and there...the basics, but real joys are sometimes few and far between. I personally often feel a level of somberness that comes with a litany of experiences."

This observation is a key one. There's something about the way different people categorize their view of life that we're really dealing with here, and I don't think it's a purely "logical" difference in conclusion. I don't know if it's cultural, clinical, genetic, chemical, educational, or some combination of these or even other factors, but to reach the conclusion that "life allows for some pleasures here and there...." is indeed a somber attitude that everyone does not share.

I would have to think about better ways to illustrate it than this quote, but this is what comes immediately to mind from the "head and heart" letter:

In a life where we are perpetually exposed to want and accident, yours is a wonderful proposition, to insulate ourselves, to retire from all aid, and to wrap ourselves in the mantle of self-sufficiency! For assuredly nobody will care for him who cares for nobody. But friendship is precious not only in the shade but in the sunshine of life: and thanks to a benevolent arrangement of things, the greater part of life is sunshine. I will recur for proof to the days we have lately passed. On these indeed the sun shone brightly! How gay did the face of nature appear! Hills, vallies, chateaux, gardens, rivers, every object wore it's liveliest hue! Whence did they borrow it? From the presence of our charming companion. They were pleasing, because she seemed pleased. Alone, the scene would have been dull and insipid: the participation of it with her gave it relish. Let the gloomy Monk, sequestered from the world, seek unsocial pleasures in the bottom of his cell! Let the sublimated philosopher grasp visionary happiness while pursuing phantoms dressed in the garb of truth! Their supreme wisdom is supreme folly: and they mistake for happiness the mere absence of pain. Had they ever felt the solid pleasure of one generous spasm of the heart, they would exchange for it all the frigid speculations of their lives, which you have been vaunting in such elevated terms. Believe me then, my friend, that that is a miserable arithmetic which would estimate friendship at nothing, or at less than nothing. Respect for you has induced me to enter into this discussion, and to hear principles uttered which I detest and abjure. Respect for myself now obliges me to recall you into the



[Founders Online: From Thomas Jefferson to Maria Cosway, 12 October 1786](https://founders.archives.gov)
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Maybe these sentiments are hard to reduce to a logical formula, but I see in the difference between these two perspectives something that goes to the heart of Epicurus vs the Buddhist perspective.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2362-2022-epicurus-vs-buddhism-compare-and-contrast-thread/?postID=16425#post16425>