

Good General Reference Post Contrasting Buddhism with Epicurus

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 3, 2022 at 10:29 AM

From the [2022 Epicurus vs Buddhism Compare and Contrast Thread](#), a chart I created:

	EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY	THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM	MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM
Founder	Epicurus	Siddhārtha Gautama	Siddhārtha Gautama, Nāgārjuna
History	<p><i>Epicurus</i> (341–270 BCE) founded this anti-Platonic ethical philosophy of non-deterministic atomism with the support of his disciples <i>Metrodorus</i>, <i>Hermarchus</i>, and <i>Polyaenus</i>. The 1st-century BCE Roman poet <i>Lucretius</i> (author of <i>De Rerum Natura</i>, "On the Nature of Things") and <i>Philodemus</i> made notable contributions to spread the philosophy. The 2nd-century CE <i>Diogenes of Oinoanda</i> is known for funding a large, Epicurean stonework project.</p>	<p><i>Siddhārtha Gautama</i> (c. 563-483 BCE), the "Awakened One" proposed a "Middle Way" between the "Eternalism" of the Brahmin religion (that proposes the existence of an eternal <i>atman</i> or "soul"), versus the "Annihilationism" of <i>Ajita Kesakambalī</i>'s hedonistic school of <i>Chārvāka</i>. Buddha rejected all metaphysical propositions and described the true nature of one's being as <i>anattā</i>, the "non-self", lacking permanency.</p>	<p><i>Nāgārjuna</i> (c. 150-250 CE) developed the highly influential <i>Madhyamaka</i> school of Buddhism (possibly influenced by Pyrrhonism through the works of Sextus Empiricus; Pyrrhonism, <i>itself</i>, was inspired by Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, the founder of Ajñāna, a competitor of early Buddhism). Many other influential Buddhists helped spread the religion, such as <i>Bodhidharma</i> to China and <i>Padmasambhāva</i> to the Tibetan Plateau.</p>

EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY

Epistemology All knowledge begins with [1] *sensation* (aisthesis) caused by the interaction of external particles with our sensory organs. We detect pleasurable or painful [2] *feelings* (pathē) associated with the various sensations. Through repeated stimulation, we form [3] *anticipations* (prolepsis) about the patterns of nature.

Metaphysics Reality exists independent of the mind. The universe is made of bodies and void. Bodies are either particles that can neither be created nor destroyed, or compounds that are composed of particles. All compound objects are subject to the forces of dissolution. Both empty space and the particles that move through it are infinite in number and eternal in time. The mind is a compound structure associated with a living animal, and can be located within the body.

THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

All knowledge is validated by two *paramana* or "proofs", [1] *pratyakṣa* or "perception" and [2] *anumāna* or "inference". *Perception* and *inference* are due to the six *āyatana* or "sense objects" of *sight*, *sound*, *odor*, *taste*, *touch*, and *thought*. The *āyatana* are not organs, but rather, appearances.

Reality is a changing, experiential aggregate, composed of [1] the elemental forms (*rūpa*) - solid earth, cohesive water, mobile gas, warm fire, and empty space, [2] sensuous feeling (*vedanā*), [3] mental cognition (*saṃjñā*), [4] willful determination (*saṅkhāra*), and [5] consciousness (*viññāna*). Natural patterns are observed, but propositions about them are dismissed as meaningless speculations.

The only meaningful thing to *know* is that all objects lack independent existences. Things only meaningfully exist within the continuum of the mind. Physical phenomena is dismissed as *māyā* meaning "magic" or "illusions", and the appearance of the natural world is dismissed as a dream.

Reality is *sūnyatā* or "emptiness". All things lack a *svabhava* or "independent nature" (as was used by the atheistic *Chārvāka* to refer to the physical nature of reality). The only "real" existence is consciousness. The energetic activities of nature are simply objects that exist within the mind, including the "body" and the "self", which are also just temporary illusions within the continuous *citta-santāna* or "mindstream".

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THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

Cosmology	<p>The Earth, Sun, Moon, planets, and other linked celestial objects comprise a <i>kosmos</i> in a spatially-infinite universe with infinite <i>kosmoi</i>. All <i>kosmoi</i> are made of atoms. The seeds of life are everywhere.</p> <p>The gods are perfect, material beings, unconcerned with humanity, imagined as either as [1] indestructible, extra-terrestrial animals, or [2] thought-forms we dream due to our natural preconception of "blessedness". Epicurus is romanticized as having been god-like.</p>	<p>Beings migrate through numerous planes of existence (<i>ascending</i> to heavens and <i>descending</i> to hells). One's directionality at death reflects their <i>kamma</i> or "moral causality".</p>	<p>A variety of mythic beings inhabit the various realms, from gods to hungry ghosts. Heavens are idealized as Pure Lands, each of which is inhabited and ruled by its respective Bodhisattva.</p>
Theology	<p>Calculate the advantages of every situation based on their possibility to provide stable, long-term pleasure. Actions are judged according to their consequences. There are no eternal ethical rules. There are, however, "Masterful Opinions" attributed to Epicurus that should be studied in order to minimize pain and maximize the pleasure of the good life.</p>	<p>Divine entities are called <i>Devas</i>, blissful beings who inhabit emotional "planes of existence". As they refine their <i>kamma</i> or "moral causality", they get closer to the goal of <i>Nibbāna</i>. Each realm is defined by the disposition of its inhabitant.</p>	<p><i>Buddha</i> is treated as a deity, and other Buddhas are acknowledged to exist besides Shakyamuni (Gautama Buddha). Buddhahood is available to everyone and the achievements of <i>Siddhārtha</i> are not as emphasized as is the <i>Buddha-nature</i>, itself.</p>
Ethics:	<p>Follow the <i>Noble Eightfold Path</i> according to the <i>dhamma</i> or "law" taught by Buddha to achieve <i>Nibbāna</i>, the "extinguishment" of suffering: [1] Right Resolve, [2] Right Speech, [3] Right Conduct, [4] Right Livelihood, [5] Right Effort [6] Right Mindfulness, [7] Right Meditation, and [8] Right view that death is not the end.</p>	<p>The path of the Mahāyāna <i>bodhisattva</i> involves going beyond the <i>Eightfold Path</i> of the <i>arhat</i> to devote themselves toward practicing Buddhism for the benefit of all beings before finally achieving a state of <i>Nirvāṇa</i>. This continuous mission is thought to extend beyond an individual's life into their future lives.</p>	

EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY

Goal of Life: A godlike state of pure pleasure, a disposition of imperturbable joy, free from physical pain and mental anguish. The practice of prudence will lead the wise person to the good life.

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Nibbāna, the end of *dukkha* or "suffering" and release from *saṃsāra*, the cycle of rebirths caused due to one's *avidyā* or "ignorance" of *anicca* or "impermanence".

To achieve *Nirvāṇa*, one must pursue the altruistic path of the *bodhisattva*, who works for the benefit of all beings by helping others achieve *bodhi* or "enlightenment".