

Response to Daily Stoic Comparison of Epicurus vs the Stoics

Post by "Don" of April 21, 2023 at 9:47 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurus focused on PLEASURE as the guide of life. Eudaimonia and flourishing are terms associated with Aristotle and other Greeks, not the Epicurean perspective.

I agree with [Little Rocker](#) that Epicurus had every intention of engaging in the debates that were roiling through ancient Greek culture and philosophical debate for some time. Epicurus was more than happy to meet on the "field of (philosophical) battle" so to speak and to attempt to set the philosophical aright (as he saw it). I see parallels with his arguments for pleasure being the telos. Plato's [Philebus](#) tries to argue against pleasure; Epicurus tried to show how the argument in that work was fallacious. The Cyrenaics had one view of pleasure; Epicurus engaged with them to show how they were wrong.

Same with eudaimonia. Epicurus included eudaimonia as one of the results of living a pleasurable life. Eudaimonia was part of Epicurus's vocabulary and he had no issue including it in his philosophy. I found 6 instances of his use of the word eudaimonia itself plus one use in the commentary of Diogenes Laertius discussing Epicurus's philosophy in a cursory search of his texts:

[PD33](#). The body cries out to not be hungry, not be thirsty, not be cold. Anyone who has these things, and who is confident of continuing to have them, can rival the gods for ****happiness****.

σαρκὸς φωνὴ τὸ μὴ πεινῆν, τὸ μὴ διψῆν, τὸ μὴ ῥιγοῦν· ταῦτα γὰρ ἔχων τις καὶ ἐλπίζων ἔξειν [hope or expect to have] κἂν <δὲ [dative of Zeus]> ὑπὲρ ****εὐδαιμονίας**** μαχέσαιο. [contend/compete]

Fr. 548. ****Happiness**** and bliss are produced not by great riches nor vast possessions nor exalted occupations nor positions of power, but rather by peace of mind, freedom from pain, and a disposition of the soul that sets its limits in accordance with nature.

τὸ ****εὐδαιμον**** καὶ μακάριον [happiness and blessedness] οὐ χρημάτων πλῆθος οὐδὲ πραγμάτων ὄγκος οὐδ' ἀρχαί τινες ἔχουσιν οὐδὲ δυνάμεις, ἀλλ' ἀλυπία καὶ πραότης παθῶν καὶ διάθεσις ψυχῆς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ὀρίζουσα.

Letter to Menoikeus

[122] Μήτε νέος τις ὦν μελλέτω φιλοσοφεῖν, μήτε γέρον ὑπάρχων κοπιάτω φιλοσοφῶν. οὔτε γὰρ ἄωρος οὐδεὶς ἐστὶν οὔτε πάρωρος πρὸς τὸ κατὰ ψυχὴν ὑγιαῖνον. ὁ δὲ λέγων ἢ μήπω τοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν ὑπάρχειν ἢ παρεληλυθέναι τὴν ὥραν ὁμοίος ἐστὶ τῷ λέγοντι πρὸς ****εὐδαιμονίαν**** ἢ μήπω παρεῖναι τὴν ὥραν ἢ μηκέτ' εἶναι. ὥστε φιλοσοφητέον καὶ νέω καὶ γέροντι, τῷ μὲν ὅπως γηράσκων νεάζῃ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς διὰ τὴν χάριν τῶν γεγονότων, τῷ δ' ὅπως νέος ἅμα καὶ παλαιὸς ἦ διὰ τὴν ἀφοβίαν τῶν μελλόντων. μελετᾶν οὖν χρὴ τὰ ποιῶντα τὴν ****εὐδαιμονίαν****, εἴ περ παρούσης μὲν αὐτῆς πάντα ἔχομεν, ἀπούσης δὲ πάντα πράττομεν εἰς τὸ ταύτην ἔχειν.

[122] Neither must one who is young delay in loving and pursuing wisdom; nor should one who is old grow weary of loving and pursuing wisdom; because it is neither out of season nor untimely for the health of the psychē. And one who says either the season to love and practice wisdom is not yet arrived or the season has passed by is like someone who is saying either the proper time has not arrived or is no more for ****eudaimonia****. Therefore, both the young and old must love and pursue wisdom. On the one hand, the old can be young by means of gratitude for the pleasures which have happened; on the other hand, the young can be as if they are old in years by means of the fearlessness of facing what is intended to be done or what is to come. You must study and meditate upon that which produces ****eudaimonia****. For if indeed that is present, we have everything; if that is not present, we do anything to have it.

[127] ... Ἀναλογιστέον δὲ ὡς τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσι φυσικαί, αἱ δὲ κεναί, καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν αἱ μὲν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ φυσικαὶ μόνον· τῶν δ' ἀναγκαίων αἱ μὲν πρὸς ****εὐδαιμονίαν**** εἰσὶν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν.

And of the natural ones, on the one hand, are the necessary ones; on the other, the ones which are only natural; then, of the necessary ones: on the one hand, those necessary for ****eudaimonia****; then, those necessary for the freedom from disturbance for the body; then those necessary for life itself.

Letter to Pythocles

[116] οὐδὲ γὰρ εἰς τὸ τυχὸν ζῶον, κἂν <εἰ> μικρὸν χαριέστερον εἴη, ἢ τοιαύτη μωρία ἐμπέσοι, μὴ ὅτι εἰς παντελῆ ****εὐδαιμονίαν**** κεκτημένον [acquire, possess, own].

"Ταῦτα δὴ πάντα, Πυθόκλεις, μνημόνευσον:

[116] For such folly as this would not possess the most ordinary being if ever so little enlightened, much less one who enjoys perfect ****eudaimonia****.

"All this, Pythocles, you should keep in mind ;

Laërtius commentary not Epicurus: DL X [121]

Τὴν ****εὐδαιμονίαν**** διχῆ νοεῖσθαι, τὴν τε ἀκροτάτην, οἷα ἐστὶ περὶ τὸν θεόν, ἐπίτασιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν: καὶ τὴν <κατὰ τὴν> προσθήκην καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν ἡδονῶν.

Μετιτέον δ' ἐπὶ τὴν ἐπιστολήν.

"Ἐπίκουρος Μενοικεῖ χαίρειν.

[121] Two sorts of ****happiness**** can be conceived, the one the highest possible, such as the gods enjoy, which cannot be augmented, the other admitting addition and subtraction of pleasures.

We must now proceed to his letter.

"Epicurus to Menoeceus, greeting.