

Meditation and Epicurean Philosophy (?)

Post by "Cassius" of November 18, 2023 at 1:39 PM

Now that this thread has come to life again I reviewed it from the beginning and decided to change the title to "Meditation and Epicurean Philosophy (?)."

To my recollection we have never held a close discussion of what "meditation" really means. By raising the point I realize that bringing it up will seem to be an invitation to go there, and I am not even sure that is desirable consistent with our forum goals. One of the main reasons for the existence of this forum is to resist any effort at amalgamation of teachings from schools which have highly different views of the universe and of the goal of life, and a thread which becomes an advertisement for "the benefits of Buddhist meditation" or "the benefits of Stoic mindfulness" is going to skirt close to something that needs to be conducted elsewhere. On the other hand, "the hazards of Buddhist meditation" or "the hazards of Stoic mindfulness" would be more obviously consistent with the purposes of the forum.

[As per the Wikipedia page on meditation:](#)

Difficulties in defining meditation

No universally accepted definition

Meditation has proven difficult to define as it covers a wide range of dissimilar practices in different traditions. In popular usage, the word "meditation" and the phrase "meditative practice" are often used imprecisely to designate practices found across many [cultures](#).^{[19][20]} These can include almost anything that is claimed to train the attention of mind or to teach calmness or compassion.^[21] There remains no definition of necessary and sufficient criteria for meditation that has achieved universal or widespread acceptance within the modern scientific [community](#). In 1971, [Claudio Naranjo](#) noted that "The word 'meditation' has been used to designate a variety of practices that differ enough from one another so that we may find trouble defining what meditation is."^[22]: 6 A 2009 study noted a "persistent lack of consensus in the [literature](#)" and a "seeming intractability of defining meditation".^[23]

Separation of technique from tradition^[edit]

Some of the difficulty in precisely defining meditation has been in recognizing the particularities of the many various [traditions](#);^[24] and theories and practice can differ within a [tradition](#).^[25] Taylor noted that even within a [faith](#) such as "Hindu" or "Buddhist", schools and individual teachers may teach distinct types of meditation.^[26]: 2 Ornstein noted that "Most techniques of meditation do not exist as solitary practices but are only artificially separable from an entire system of practice and belief."^[27]: 143 For instance, while monks meditate as part of their everyday lives, they also engage in the codified rules and live together in monasteries in

specific cultural settings that go along with their meditative practices.

I think for the moment I am going to close this thread and refer the issue to a moderator discussion before we proceed further. I feel confident from past experience that some of our core people find mediation of a type helpful (Matt, who started the thread, being a good example.) But one of the purposes of this forum is to provide direction for people who are new to Epicurus, and we need to first identify to what extent certain variations on "meditation" can be harmful from an Epicurean perspective.

I'll set something up on that and eventually this thread will likely be re-opened, but we at least need a reference somewhere that covers basics on:

1. The hazards of certain types of mediation,
2. What types of meditation might be consistent with Epicurean philosophy, and
3. What references if any in the Epicurean texts indicate endorsement of any type of meditation.