

2022 Epicurus vs Buddhism Compare and Contrast Thread

Post by "Robert" of September 29, 2025 at 8:33 PM

[Kalosyni](#) Glad to meet another Epicurean former Buddhist! Were you affiliated with a particular Buddhist school/tradition? I started off with Zen but gravitated towards Theravada, in part because I like reading those ancient texts.

Yes, the idea of rebirth seems to founder on various paradoxes. We could say that the causal factors ("dependent origination") will spawn a new being, after I die, that inherits my karma. But since that new being doesn't remember being me, where's the continuity? And if it does remember, then there must be some vehicle for transmitting that memory, and doesn't that end up becoming a sort of Self -in-disguise? Questions, questions ..

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

An major issue that I have with Buddhism is that it has an extremely "skeptic" take on the ability of the mind to understand things (as well as using skepticism as a method for how to overcome suffering through mental thought regulation rather than by taking actions). Parallels can be seen between Pyrrhonism and Buddhism. (I just found this if you want to [read about the comparison between the two](#)). If a mentally unstable person practices this, it can have bad results (and likely bad results for a mostly mentally stable person also).

That was a concern for me also. Not only the skepticism that knowledge is possible, but the denial that it has actual value--things are only worthwhile if they aid in the escape from samsara. Knowledge negation is bound up with life negation.

Quote from Kalosyni

The idea of "samsara" is a very negative view of life, but yet certain people do have a lot of suffering depending on their circumstances (war, poverty, low wage-slavery, lack of sanitary infrastructure in third-world countries).

An interesting question here about how philosophy and/or religion address this kind of suffering. Buddhism sometimes seems close to Stoicism in that it teaches us to overcome suffering by devaluing it. You don't need to grieve for your lost friend or loved one--he or she was just another transient being. Poverty, ill health, slavery (wage or otherwise) are the fruits of bad karma. The hope offered is that by taking refuge in Buddha you'll have less of this next time around.

How should an Epicurean address it? We have the tetrapharmakon. But is it sufficient in some of the extreme cases you mention?