

Mako's Epicurean Outline

Post by “Mako” of January 20, 2018 at 1:25 PM

Hello all. I'd like to thank Cassius and the community for supporting the outline concept. I think this will be a very useful tool as I continue my early studies in Epicureanism. I anticipate that my personal outline will initially focus more on Knowledge, Truth and How to live, though I may be grossly neglecting other areas of study that would benefit and support the position of happy wisdom I am trying to reach. Right now, I am still trying to *understand* the foundations of the philosophy and discover how to keep it fresh in my mind in every day life, living by the doctrines that have brought me happiness when I study them.

I am very busy, as we all are, and sadly tend to fall behind on my studies during periods of stress. This has been what's kept me from keeping the philosophy several times in the past. I am trying to remain encouraged and organized in my attempts now, and having the support and knowledge of an Epicurean community is likely what has kept me successful this go around. **If I had one goal initial goal for my outline, it would be to construct it so that I can keep the early, basic foundations of Nature, Truth and Ethics fresh in my mind every single day regardless of how busy life may be at the time, and live in accordance with the key principles** even when the time I would prefer to spend deepening my studies is consumed. Any input, suggestions and advice (even if not related to the outline) are wholly welcome and appreciated as I continue not only to continue my studies, but retain what I've learned.

I will initially only start with what I believe I can recall from texts from memory. If I am greatly misinterpreting any principles (beyond the realm of personal interpretation), guidance that will bring my outline closer to the truth is entirely welcome.

Please, do not let any blank spaces or areas "under construction" keep you from offering your input.

1. Nature / Physics (*)
 1. All matter is composed of bodies, which travel within the void.
 2. The senses receive matter and allow the body to perceive it.
 3. Nothing can be created from nothing, and similarly, nothing may be rendered to nothing.
 4. The gods are immortal beings that are imperceptible to us. (**)
2. Knowledge /Truth
 1. Nature derives truth from the senses. What the senses tell us is pleasurable and painful is true, as Nature confirms this in life that is unable to reason beyond sensations of pleasure and pain. Therefore, Nature defines the goal of life as living a pleasurable life.

2. Reasoning should be in line with the ultimate goal of life, and should use the senses and observations as its criteria for determining what is painful and pleasurable, and therefore what is true.
 3. Choice and avoidance, as well as reasoning on things which may not be observed by the senses, should be based on the reasoning mentioned above. Experience and evidence must be applied to those things of which one is unsure.
 4. There are limits imposed by Nature, such as mortality and the limits of pleasure. We must not attempt to overcome these limits.
 5. It is the nature of life that we experience inherent pain by need, such as need of food and water.
3. Ethics / How to live
1. The highest state of pleasure is when all pain, be it need or desire, is removed. After this, we experience no greater pleasure. (***)
 2. All choice and avoidance should be made to achieve and maintain a pleasurable life, free of pain. We should act to avoid pain and fear firstly. (***)
 3. To obtain the highest state of mental pleasure, you must reflect on pleasure, pain, your choices and observations in regards to the ultimate goal of life, the limits of life, and what can be confirmed as true.
 4. You must enjoy your present blessings while recalling happiness past, without worrying for the future, which is uncertain. However, you must actively choose to make your future happier than your present.
 5. Pleasure should always be chosen for pleasure's sake, but simplicity should only be chosen if it begets pleasure. In the same way, we must accustom ourselves to simplicity so that we are happy when we have little, and enjoy luxury all the more.
 6. The wise man will live pleasantly, well and justly only if each of these virtues are present simultaneously.
 7. Friendship will secure lasting happiness, but the wise man may protect himself from men and the prison of ignorance by living quietly and withdrawn from the public.
 8. Good, evil and justice are subjective constructs. Nature truly defines what is good and evil as what is pleasurable and painful, respectively. Justice is a contract not to cause pain to one another.

(*) It appears I need to study my Elementals more closely.

(**) My confusion shows here. Epicurus denied the existence of a God, but I thought I recall him also saying they exist, but are not as man believes them to be. They immortal and happy, the model that we seek to follow by living a pleasurable life. Was Epicurus using the word "God" to demonstrate this, but not actually claiming there were heavenly figures above us?

(***) After the initial draft, I can say that my understanding of removing pain to obtain the highest pleasure may be lacking. This is where I am careful not to approach the Stoic mindset again by seeking first to remove all pain and desire by simple means. The Full Cup model has helped with this, but I seem to still be a little unsure as to how to *think* of it.