

# Response to Daily Stoic Comparison of Epicurus vs the Stoics

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2020 at 7:20 AM

Someone at FB posted this link, which I don't recall seeing before:  
<https://dailystoic.com/epicureanism-vs-stoicism/>

Here are my major objections/issues with it on first reading. I quote the statement about Epicurus that I think needs clarification or is incorrect and then give my comment:

\*\* *They believed in thermodynamic entropy (it's easier to destroy arrangements of atoms than for the arrangements to be made, thus the universe is ageing towards a state of complete disorganization).* <<<< I don't believe this is correct from the texts. Yes decay takes place in parts of the universe, but in other parts the atoms are coming together, and this offsets the decay, so in total the different parts of the universe remain constantly cycling, not decaying overall.

\*\* *Pain and suffering were bad, happiness and fulfillment were good.* <<< This may be true, but how in the world did he write that sentence without using the word PLEASURE? Using words like "fulfillment" is a typically Stoic way of avoiding the premise that Nature gives us the feeling of pleasure as the guide rather than abstraction like fulfillment, and that is why Epicurus talked about pleasure in general rather than using euphemisms or terms that are more narrow and indicative of a particular limited type of pleasure (e.g., "'fulfillment').

\*\* *It's a certain medieval christian bias that led to the interpretation of Epicureanism as the pursuit of sensual pleasure.* <<<< No, this is not true, because Epicurus DID advocate the pursuit of sensual pleasure. The inaccuracy is that he advocated the pursuit of ALL KINDS of pleasure, including mental / emotional, and not ONLY sensual.

\*\* *What is important is the Greek term Eudaimonia, which is often translated as happiness, but has little to do today with what we call happiness (the bubbly, pleasurable sensation that accompanies agreeable outcomes and events). Perhaps a better translation would be "Flourishing of life."* <<< This is misleading. Epicurus focused on PLEASURE as the guide of life. Eudaimonia and flourishing are terms associated with Aristotle and other Greeks, not the Epicurean perspective.

\*\* *Accordingly, the Epicureans advocated moderation in things, and a balanced, "agreeable" life that pursued the "higher pleasures" of fraternity, self improvement, and freedom from the fear of death, which they thought would result in the freedom of all fear.* <<<< False in several

respects. Again, "moderation" is Aristotle - there is no advocacy of "moderation" in Epicurus. In fact it is the opposite, pleasure is the goal, and it should be pursued with all the vigor possible, but that means prudently so that in fact the pleasure is maximized, not run amok and creating needless pain. Also, there are no "higher" pleasures ranked by Epicurus. Friendship is one of the greatest tools for achieving pleasure, but it is given no "ranking" as superior kind of pleasure - nor is any other type of pleasure-- pleasure is pleasure.

*\*\*They saw anxiety as the great thorn in mankind's side, and their philosophical project was to rid themselves of it. <<< Partially true but misleading. Anxiety is certainly to be diminished, as is all pain, but the focus is on achieving pleasure, and we will at times choose pain in order to achieve greater pleasure.*