

# Welcome Kungi!

Post by “Cassius” of July 22, 2022 at 4:13 AM

Welcome [Kungi](#) !

**Note:** In order to minimize spam registrations, all new registrants must respond in this thread to this welcome message within 72 hours of its posting, or their account is subject to deletion. All that is required is a "Hello!" but of course we hope you will introduce yourself further and join one or more of our conversations.

This is the place for students of Epicurus to coordinate their studies and work together to promote the philosophy of Epicurus. Please remember that all posting here is subject to our [Community Standards / Rules of the Forum](#) our [Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean](#) and our [Posting Policy statements](#) and [associated posts](#).

Please understand that the leaders of this forum are well aware that many fans of Epicurus may have sincerely-held views of what Epicurus taught that are incompatible with the purposes and standards of this forum. This forum is dedicated exclusively to the study and support of people who are committed to classical Epicurean views. As a result, this forum is not for people who seek to mix and match some Epicurean views with positions that are inherently inconsistent with the core teachings of Epicurus.

All of us who are here have arrived at our respect for Epicurus after long journeys through other philosophies, and we do not demand of others what we were not able to do ourselves. Epicurean philosophy is very different from other viewpoints, and it takes time to understand how deep those differences really are. That's why we have membership levels here at the forum which allow for new participants to discuss and develop their own learning, but it's also why we have standards that will lead in some cases to arguments being limited, and even participants being removed, when the purposes of the community require it. Epicurean philosophy is not inherently democratic, or committed to unlimited free speech, or devoted to any other form of organization other than the pursuit by our community of happy living through the principles of Epicurean philosophy.

One way you can be most assured of your time here being productive is to tell us a little about yourself and personal your background in reading Epicurean texts. It would also be helpful if you could tell us how you found this forum, and any particular areas of interest that you have which would help us make sure that your questions and thoughts are addressed.

In that regard we have found over the years that there are a number of key texts and references which most all serious students of Epicurus will want to read and evaluate for themselves. Those include the following.

1. ["Epicurus and His Philosophy"](#) by Norman DeWitt
2. [The Biography of Epicurus by Diogenes Laertius.](#) This includes the surviving letters of Epicurus, including those to [Herodotus](#), [Pythocles](#), and [Menoceus](#).
3. ["On The Nature of Things"](#) - by Lucretius (a poetic abridgement of Epicurus' "On Nature")
4. ["Epicurus on Pleasure"](#) - By Boris [Nikolsky](#)
5. The chapters on Epicurus in [Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks On Pleasure."](#)
6. [Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section](#)
7. [Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section](#)
8. The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda - [Martin Ferguson Smith translation](#)
9. [A Few Days In Athens" - Frances Wright](#)
10. Lucian Core Texts on Epicurus: (1) [Alexander the Oracle-Monger](#), (2) [Hermetimus](#)
11. [Philodemus "On Methods of Inference"](#) (De Lacy version, including his appendix on relationship of Epicurean canon to Aristotle and other Greeks)
12. "The Greeks on Pleasure" -Gosling & Taylor Sections on Epicurus, especially the [section on katastematic and kinetic pleasure](#) which explains why ultimately this distinction was not of great significance to Epicurus.

It is by no means essential or required that you have read these texts before participating in the forum, but your understanding of Epicurus will be much enhanced the more of these you have read.

And time has also indicated to us that if you can find the time to read one book which will best explain [classical Epicurean philosophy](#), as opposed to most modern "eclectic" interpretations of Epicurus, that book is Norman DeWitt's ***Epicurus And His Philosophy.***

***Welcome to the forum!***

# Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean

1. Not "flourishing," "human potential," "self-actualization," or "meaningfulness," but happiness grounded in the feeling of pleasure.
2. Not "absence of pain" as a full statement of the goal of life, but "the Feelings are two, pleasure and pain" and "Pleasure is the beginning and the end of a happy life."
3. Not virtue for the sake of virtue, but virtue as instrumental for the attainment of pleasure.
4. Not "the greatest good for the greatest number," but "Every desire must be confronted with this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished and what if it is not?"
5. Not "humanism," "transhumanism," "individualism," "collectivism," "egoism," "altruism," "social progress," "Marxism," "democracy," "tyranny," or any "one size fits all" political ideal of any kind, but social structure based on friendship which "is formed and maintained by means of a community of life among those who have reached the fullness of pleasure."
6. Not "hard determinism," but "some things happen from necessity, some from chance, and others through our own choice."
7. Not "supernaturalism," but "materialism."
8. Not "supernatural gods," or "life after death," but confidence in a fully material universe and "for those men for whom wisdom is possible, and who do seek it, such men may truly live as gods."
9. Not only "short term hedonism," but "it is to continuous pleasures that I invite you."
10. Not "rationalism," but "all reason is dependent upon sensations."
11. Not fearful of death nor careless of losing life, but valuing life for the opportunity of pleasure it brings.

## Our Posting Policy At EpicureanFriends.com:

**"No Partisan Politics," "No Supernatural Religion," and "No Absolute Virtue"**

This forum is dedicated to promoting the philosophy of Epicurus, and not to any partisan political positions whether "left," "right," or "center." The task of rediscovering Epicurean philosophy requires that such discussions be held elsewhere. Posts violating this rule are subject to removal.



Epicurean philosophy firmly rejects the viewpoint that there are any supernatural forces or absolute virtues or Platonic ideals of any kind. Argument which is based on supernatural claims, or "absolute" virtues or ideals of any kind, are in violation of this rule and subject to removal.

2693-pasted-from-clipboard-png

---

## **Post by “Pacatus” of July 22, 2022 at 3:30 PM**

Welcome to a safe and wise place.

---

## **Post by “Kungi” of July 23, 2022 at 4:00 AM**

Hello!

I have been reading the forum without an account for some time now and I am very impressed by what you have built here. It is a treasure trove of wisdom in the all knowing landfill we call the internet.

### **About me**

- currently in the later part of my thirties.
- German living in Germany
- Studied Computer Science
- Own a small consulting firm with ~10 Employees where we develop software for our corporate clients.

### **My way to Epicurus**

For the last ten years I had an interest stoic philosophy, even once considering myself a capital S Stoic for some time. I read the stoic authors (mostly Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus) and first came into contact with Epicurus in Senecas Letters to Lucilius. I was prone to bursts of anger and practical Stoicism helped me to become much calmer and happier person. But there are some teachings in Stoicism that don't fit well with the way I see the world. Especially that virtue is the end and that peace of mind only might follow from virtue never convinced me. I always thought that it should be the other way around, that peace of mind should be the goal.

After reading Hiram Crespo's essay about Epicureanism in the book “How to live a good life” I had a look at Epicureanism. I read his book “Tending the epicurean garden” and am currently re-reading it and organising my notes.

### **Interests**

My Interests are for the most part in applied philosophy. If philosophy does not change the way I live my day to day life, what is it good for. I keep a list of open questions at hand. Maybe you can guide me to interesting articles / forum posts addressing these:

- What is virtue for an epicurean?
- How does it differ from stoic virtue?
- How do you apply these virtues?
- What practical epicurean exercises are there?
- What are the practical differences between Epicureanism and Stoicism. Where would an Epicurean act differently from a Stoic?

This is the beginning of my epicurean journey. It is very pleasurable so far :-D.

---

### **Post by “Martin” of July 23, 2022 at 6:39 AM**

Welcome Kungi!

Here are quick answers to your first three questions:

For an Epicurean, virtue is one of the tools to experience pleasure.

In Epicurean philosophy, what is virtuous depends on the particular context, whereas in Stoic philosophy, they seem to be rather absolute.

Wisdom is a particularly important virtue because it is used in the hedonic calculus to decide which actions should be taken / are virtuous.

---

### **Post by “Cassius” of July 23, 2022 at 6:51 AM**

Thank you Kungi! I only have time for a few comments now but you have raised many deep issues and I am sure others will chime in too.

First it is interesting to observe where our new participants are located. As you probably observe we have several Germans here - probably a higher percentage than pure population

statistics would predict - and it is interesting to consider why.

Second, Hiram's work reaches a lot of people and that's good to know about your background. I would say this regardless, but especially knowing that, that I highly recommend your going through the DeWitt book as soon as you can for the width of background that he provides for someone at an early stage of reading. I find that people who skip that will often take longer than they would otherwise to see "the forest" rather than just "the trees" which may have attracted them initially.

As to the basic issue of Stoicism, you of course hit the nail on the head by focusing on "virtue." If you have not read the Torquatus presentation of this issue in On Ends ([see our text section](#)) you will want to read that.

The "modern" stoics tend to discount the issue of virtue, but there are fundamentalist stoics even today who recognize that the philosophy makes no sense if you do do. But they de-emphasize it because once you do examine the Stoic foundations they melt away if you walk away from the virtue/religious aspects of it.

Epicurus is rigorously logical, and once identifying pleasure in a general and sweeping sense as the goal, all else (even virtue) is instrumental toward that goal, as Torquatus explains well.

There is much more to say and add but this is a start. If you will go through the DeWitt book and focus on understanding the "big picture" as soon as you can, I think that will help a lot in your seeing that each of the answers to your questions derives from that "big picture," rather than being a set of arbitrary rules as if out of a doctor's medicine bag. There are indeed many bits of practical advice, but until you see the big picture it's hard to understand how profoundly different the Epicurean view of the happy life is from that of Stoicism or the other larger Greek schools.

---

## **Post by “Godfrey” of July 23, 2022 at 3:14 PM**

Welcome Kungi!

The most important practical exercise for a person beginning to explore Epicurus is to set aside and follow through with a daily time to study. Epicurean philosophy is much more of a unified worldview than a specific set of practices. Paradoxically, it's a very straightforward philosophy, but, due to the dearth of original texts and the Academic backgrounds of many of the secondary writers, it takes quite a while to understand properly.

I agree with Cassius on the reading he recommends. There's also much here on the forums to review: an overwhelming amount!

Another practical exercise, which is equal in importance with the first that I mentioned, is to post questions and discuss issues of interest to you. Key to the philosophy is friendship and frank speech and this is one manifestation of those ideas.

Speaking only from my personal experience, I advise (with much respect) putting aside Hiram's book for a while. That was one of the first books that I read after discovering Epicurus, and I found that it wasn't a very direct path, for me personally, to understanding the philosophy. It may well be worthwhile for you to return to, but I don't advise it as a starting point.

One final recommendation would be to read Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*. That's what started me on my Epicurean journey: I was attempting to reconcile some of the inconsistencies in Stoicism and realized, perhaps like you, that Epicurus had already done that.

---

## **Post by “Kalosyni” of July 23, 2022 at 9:59 PM**

Welcome Kungi!

### [Quote from Kungi](#)

What is virtue for an epicurean?

This is a good question, and I agree with what the others have said so far.

It also brings up the idea of actually listing (on one's own, for oneself) what virtues lead to pleasure and a pleasant life. This should be a kind of simple common sense list, and it may be worth some contemplation. This list would be based on what leads to the best outcome for the overall most pleasant life. I would say thinking about this will bring one to think rationally, justly, and wisely when moving through life.

As for my own studies, I have been focusing on the Principle Doctrines, the Vatican Sayings, and the Letter to Menoecus. (And wanting to eventually study more closely the Diogenes Wall of Oinoanda, the "wise man" list within Diogenes Laertius Book X, as well as "unpack" the Torquatus section of Cicero's "On Ends".)

Also an important interpretation regarding pleasure -- to remember "it is not the pleasures of the profligate" (letter to Menoecus) AND "no pleasure is bad, but some lead to much worse pains" (PD8). And here one might want to contemplate what would be considered to be

excessive and also what would bring longterm pains -- some things are obvious and others may just be a matter of trial and error. I would say that there is no one-size-fits-all "absolute rule" list, because wisdom comes from thinking these things through for oneself -- though a friend might speak privately to another good friend about these things if a particular situation comes up requiring it (not in judgment, but out of caring and compassion).

Good luck in your continued Epicurean studies! 😊

---

## Post by “Pacatus” of July 24, 2022 at 1:18 AM

@ Kungi

For me, a virtue is something that leads to a value. For Aristotle, the ultimate value (that which is not just instrumental, leading to another, higher value) was *eudaimonia* – a life of happy well-being. A virtue is anything that leads to that goal (*telos*).

But if the goal (value) is to, say, split wood well, a proper and well-honed axe is a virtuous axe. The Greek term, *arete* ("excellence"), included but was not limited to moral virtue.

The Stoics seem to have generally equated a set of specific moral virtues with *eudaimonia* itself: If you were sufficiently wise, courageous, just and temperate – then you must have had a *eudaimonic* life. (This is not to suggest that the Stoics were a monolithic group, without variations – nor that they did not recognize *eupathe*: good feelings, as opposed to the more general *pathe*, for which they recommend *apatheia*). As one modern Stoic, Massimo Pigliucci, suggested in a blog I read, *eudaimonia* thus becomes a value judgment: “Have I done well enough?” (Again, there are variations among Stoics, old and new.)

For Epicureans, *eudaimonia* is a life pleasantly lived. A life pleasantly lived means one in which natural pleasures (mental and physical) outweigh pain and suffering (mental and physical).

And that goal (*telos*) requires certain social, as well as strictly personal virtues. To live justly, for example (which Epicurus thought was necessary to live such a life), means actively making due allowance for others to also have what they need to live such a life. None of the virtues are abstract (or Platonic) ideals worthy in themselves per se (or *eudaimonic* in themselves per se) – but are instrumental. An Epicurean view of socially virtuous behavior – for me – is grounded more in natural sympathy/empathy (which can be cultivated, but not demanded) than in any simple, dictated “should.”

That is my simplified interpretive summary. (But there are others here who are better versed than I – including those who have posted here before me.)

## Post by “Cassius” of July 24, 2022 at 8:37 AM

### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

For Epicureans, eudaimonia is a life pleasantly lived. A life pleasantly lived means one in which natural pleasures (mental and physical) outweigh pain and suffering (mental and physical).

I found Pacatus' post in full very good, but I would caution against the formulation "natural pleasures ... outweigh...) That is not the way Epicurus formulated it - he referenced "Pleasure" as the goal without qualification - so this formulation might well lead off in an unproductive direction.

I would say the natural and necessary classifications help us predict the amount of pain that will be required to attain them, but to imply that there is a flat rule that everyone should seek only "natural" pleasures would be going too far.

That's the real reason we debate this issue so much - because people tend to infer "natural and necessary ONLY" from the discussion and I would say that is a major mistake.

We need to continue to talk about how to avoid an overbroad formulation here and what issues arise with this. What exactly are "unnatural" pleasures? Should we seek none of them at all to any degree? If there is such a list then does that list constitute a Platonically universal list of "Thou shalt nots" like the Ten Commandments?

Please do not take this Pacatus as critical of you personally -- and if you would like to in fact defend that position, please do, as that would help the discussion move forward too.

But any time we leave open the implication that the ideal Epicurean life would be in a cave with bread and water then we create major theoretical problems.

---

## Post by “Pacatus” of July 24, 2022 at 12:09 PM

### [Pacatus](#)

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Please do not take this Pacatus as critical of you personally -- and if you would like to in fact defend that position, please do, as that would help the discussion move forward

too.

No, I think your correction is spot on. 😊 Thank you for making it. (And no cave with bread and water, please!)

LATE EDIT: I think I've walked into this error before; I am reading the thread "Differences Between Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism" -- because I think my mistake might stem, at least in part, from an erroneous (or at least a sloppy) understanding of the distinctions there; and I think I should probably re-read [Nikolsky](#).

---

### **Post by “Kungi” of July 25, 2022 at 6:17 AM**

#### [Quote from Martin](#)

For an Epicurean, virtue is one of the tools to experience pleasure.

In Epicurean philosophy, what is virtuous depends on the particular context, whereas in Stoic philosophy, they seem to be rather absolute.

The 4 Stoic virtues are:

- (practical) Wisdom
- Justice
- Temperance
- Courage

For the Stoics these are the only good things, with all others being (preferred or dispreferred) indifferents. The stoics are absolute when it comes to their cardinal (in a non christian sense) values. I think all of these virtues are important for a pleasurable life. I can't be unwise, unjust, without self discipline and a coward and have a happy life.

Are there more or different virtues in Epicureanism than these? If yes, how are they defined?

---

### **Post by “Kungi” of July 25, 2022 at 6:22 AM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

If you will go through the DeWitt book and focus on understanding the "big picture" as soon as you can

After your comment I started reading Epicurus and his Philosophy by DeWitt. When I've finished it there will be many questions. Even for a non native english speaker it is easy to understand :-). Not many philosophy books fall in this category.

Thank you for the encouragement.

---

### **Post by “Kungi” of July 25, 2022 at 6:29 AM**

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

It also brings up the idea of actually listing (on one's own, for oneself) what virtues lead to pleasure and a pleasant life.

This is an excellent idea.

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I would say that there is no one-size-fits-all "absolute rule" list, because wisdom comes from thinking these things through for oneself

I concur that there can be no "absolute rule" list but I think many of us will come to quite similar answers when trying to define what virtue is. The details of these virtues will be individualistic. For example Justice looks different to everyone in the details.

---

### **Post by “Cassius” of July 25, 2022 at 6:57 AM**

Kungi

Sorry to have hijacked your welcome with natural and necessary discussion. I will move that to a new thread.

As to this: "Are there more or different virtues in Epicureanism than these? If yes, how are they defined?"

The ultimate answer is that a course of action is counterproductive if it does not lead to pleasure, so actions are judged virtuous or not in that context. You would find the explanation of this issue given by Torquatus in on Ends to be very helpful, because the thrust of his presentation is dedicated to this issue. I will get the link and add it here in a moment.

---

### **Post by "Kungi" of July 25, 2022 at 7:05 AM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Sorry to have hijacked your welcome with natural and necessary discussion. I will move that to a new thread.

As to this: "Are there more or different virtues in Epicureanism than these? If yes, how are they defined?"

The ultimate answer is that a course of action is counterproductive if it does not lead to pleasure, so actions are judged virtuous or not in that context. You would find the explanation of this issue given by Torquatus in on Ends to be very helpful, because the thrust of his presentation is dedicated to this issue. I will get the link and add it here in a moment.

No need to be sorry. These are the discussions I am here for. When my initial comment lead to this even better :-D.

I will read Torquatus when you send the link.

---

### **Post by "Cassius" of July 25, 2022 at 7:08 AM**

Thanks Kungi.

The Torquatus discussion is here: [Cicero's "Torquatus" Presentation of Epicurean Ethics - from "On Ends"](#)

You could start at what is listed there as line 32 and it would make sense, but it would be better just to start at the beginning.

---

## Post by “Don” of July 25, 2022 at 7:14 AM

### [Quote from Kungi](#)

#### [Quote from Martin](#)

For an Epicurean, virtue is one of the tools to experience pleasure.

In Epicurean philosophy, what is virtuous depends on the particular context, whereas in Stoic philosophy, they seem to be rather absolute.

The 4 Stoic virtues are:

- (practical) Wisdom
- Justice
- Temperance
- Courage

For the Stoics these are the only good things, with all others being (preferred or dispreferred) indifferents. The stoics are absolute when it comes to their cardinal (in a non christian sense) values. I think all of these virtues are important for a pleasurable life. I can't be unwise, unjust, without self discipline and a coward and have a happy life.

Are there more or different virtues in Epicureanism than these? If yes, how are they defined?

Thanks for bringing your thread back around to the Stoic/Epicurean question. My first thought when reading the list of virtues was Principal Doctrine 5:

#### Quote from Epicurean Principal Doctrines

5 Οὐκ ἔστιν ἡδέως ζῆν ἄνευ τοῦ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως <οὐδὲ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως> ἄνευ τοῦ ἡδέως· ὅτι δ' ἔν τούτων μὴ ὑπάρχει οἷον ζῆν φρονίμως, καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως ὑπάρχει, οὐκ ἔστι τοῦτον ἡδέως ζῆν.

ἄνευ + gen = without

φρονίμως wisely, sensibly, prudently

καλῶς II. regul. adv. καλῶς, mostly in moral sense, well, rightly

δικαίως —adv. -ως, rightly, justly

ἡδέως pleasantly < ἡδονή

My translation: PD5 It is not possible to live a pleasurable life without the traits of (practical) wisdom, morality, and justice; and it is impossible to live with wisdom, morality, and justice without living pleurably. When one of these is lacking, it is impossible to live a pleasurable life.

Consider in light of Fragment 519: The greatest fruit of justice is serenity. δικαιοσύνης καρπὸς μέγιστος ἀταραξία.

Display More

Epicurus clearly thinks the "virtues" are important, but they are important because they are instrumental to achieving a pleasurable life and not as ends or goals for their own sake.

---

## Post by "Kungi" of July 25, 2022 at 10:44 AM

### [Quote from Don](#)

Thanks for bringing your thread back around to the Stoic/Epicurean question. My first thought when reading the list of virtues was Principal Doctrine 5

Quote from Epicurean Principal Doctrines

My translation: PD5 It is not possible to live a pleasurable life without the traits of (practical) wisdom, morality, and justice; and it is impossible to live with wisdom, morality, and justice without living pleurably. When one of these is lacking, it is impossible to live a pleasurable life.

Consider in light of Fragment 519: The greatest fruit of justice is serenity. δικαιοσύνης καρπὸς μέγιστος ἀταραξία.

Epicurus clearly thinks the "virtues" are important, but they are important because they are instrumental to achieving a pleasurable life and not as ends or goals for their own sake.

If I read this correctly the virtues are not only important they are essential. They are necessary and sufficient for the pleasant life as in the mathematical equivalent sense "virtue  $\Leftrightarrow$  pleasurable life". As far as I interpret PD5 there is no difference between Stoicism and Epicureanism in regard to the connection between virtue and the pleasurable life. The difference lies only in the goal.

How would you define "morality" as a virtue? What would Epicurus have meant by this term?

---

### **Post by "Don" of July 25, 2022 at 10:52 AM**

See, this is my issue with relying on translations. In Greek, the three traits/virtues are:

φρονίμως wisely, sensibly, prudently

καλῶς II. regul. adv. καλῶς, mostly in moral sense, well, rightly

δικαίως —adv. -ως, rightly, justly

And Kalōs καλῶς can be defined as:

Woodhouse, S. C. (1910) English-Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language[1], London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited.

admirable idem, page 12.

artistic idem, page 42.

auspicious idem, page 53.

beautiful idem, page 68.

buxom idem, page 107.

capital idem, page 111.

comely idem, page 145.

creditable idem, page 183.

elegant idem, page 265.  
estimable idem, page 283.  
excellent idem, page 288.  
exquisite idem, page 296.  
fair idem, page 302.  
favourable idem, page 311.  
fine idem, page 321.  
fortunate idem, page 340.  
good idem, page 366.  
goodly idem, page 367.  
handsome idem, page 383.  
happy idem, page 384.  
high-principled idem, page 400.  
honourable idem, page 405.  
hopeful idem, page 405.  
lovely idem, page 502.  
lucky idem, page 504.  
noble idem, page 559.  
ornamental idem, page 580.  
picturesque idem, page 611.  
plausible idem, page 618.  
pomantic idem, page 625.  
principled idem, page 641.  
promising idem, page 653.  
propitious idem, page 653.

reputable idem, page 699.

righteous idem, page 715.

skilful idem, page 780.

specious idem, page 799.

spruce idem, page 806.

virtuous idem, page 954.

well-favoured idem, page 974.

So, "morality" is only one Interpretation of that 2nd word.

---

### **Post by “Kalosyni” of July 25, 2022 at 10:52 AM**

Here is another translation of PD5 (St. Andre):

It is not possible to live joyously without also living wisely and beautifully and rightly, nor to live wisely and beautifully and rightly without living joyously; and whoever lacks this cannot live joyously. <a href="#">[note]</a>	οὐκ ἔστιν ἡδέως ζῆν ἄνευ τοῦ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως <οὐδὲ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως> ἄνευ τοῦ ἡδέως· ὅτι δὲ τοῦτο μὴ ὑπάρχει, οὐχ ἔστι τοῦτον ἡδέως ζῆν.
---	---

---

### **Post by “Kungi” of July 25, 2022 at 10:59 AM**

#### [Quote from Don](#)

See, this is my issue with relying on translations.

Some of us have to rely on translations. Not everyone speaks ancient greek :-D.

---

### **Post by “Kalosyni” of July 25, 2022 at 11:06 AM**

I would say that the Epicurean "moral path" or the best way to live, is to consider one's actions carefully, because if you cause harm to others, then that leads to many bad results 1) the harmed person will seek justice. 2) there will be a loss of trust, because others will no longer trust you. 3) if you do things repeatedly which harm others, then you could create habits of acting or thinking which eventually will catch up with you (as in the previous two points). So the Epicurean is motivated by what creates the best life, and not by some abstract rule of right or wrong.

[Quote from Kungi](#)

Not everyone speaks ancient greek :-D.

Me neither -- I just compare various translations and then intuitively choose what makes the most sense to me.

---

**Post by "Cassius" of July 25, 2022 at 12:30 PM**

[Quote from Kungi](#)

As far as I interpret PD5 there is no difference between Stoicism and Epicureanism in regard to the connection between virtue and the pleasurable life. The difference lies only in the goal.

Ah but that is such a huge difference, and the "only" can make it appear that the difference is slight. Further, the essential point is that the goal of life is pleasure, then what makes up each of the virtues turns on what is in fact successful living that pleasurable life, not the standard definition of those virtues given by the ancient Stoics. As I see it, the definition and role of "virtue" in Epicureanism could not be more different from that of the Stoics. You will not in fact know what is virtuous from what is the reverse of each of those virtues unless you judge them from the perspective: "Do they lead to plesasure?"

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I would say that the Epicurean "moral path" or the best way to live, is to consider one's actions carefully, because if you cause harm to others, then that leads to many bad results 1) the harmed person will seek justice. 2) there will be a loss of trust, because others will no longer trust you. 3) if you do things repeatedly which harm others, then you could create habits of acting or thinking which eventually will catch up with you (as

in the previous two points). So the Epicurean is motivated by what creates the best life, and not by some abstract rule of right or wrong.

I agree with that, but I think to be clear there is also something like a (4) to the effect that if you harm others, you may be forced into taking action to prevent them from harming you in return, which you may or may not want to do. In other words, the meaning of "harm" needs to be very clear. Sometimes you are going to restrain others from harming you, as Torquatus says, and in the case of those who are unwilling or unable to enter into no-harm agreements with you, there is no "justice" involved, and you act in accord to your interests, which may or may not involve violence.

There is no "non-violence principle" in Epicurean philosophy such as Libertarians assert in their viewpoint. If you choose to engage in violence for reasons that you deem satisfactory, you simply have to be aware of the possibility or likelihood of blowback, and make your decisions accordingly.

I say this mainly to emphasize the point that I have seen libertarians draw the line on, because they hold to an absolute non-initiation of violence principle. I would argue that there are no such absolute principles in Epicurean philosophy of any kind - there are simply sets of circumstances which you must navigate and ask yourself always "What will happen if I engage in this course and what will not." There is no absolute morality of any kind in Epicurus other than that Nature gives all living things the goal of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. There are no absolute rights and wrongs that apply to humans any more than in the animal world, where killing is a way of life. Humans, however, have the ability to enter agreements that are mutually beneficial and lead to much better results for all concerned, and that is something that would normally always be preferred. But even there, there are no supernatural gods or enforcing mechanisms that say something is right or wrong -- there is no set of defined "Natural Laws."

---

## Post by “Kalosyni” of July 26, 2022 at 8:36 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

There is no "non-violence principle" in Epicurean philosophy...

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

I would argue that there are no such absolute principles in Epicurean philosophy of any kind - there are simply sets of circumstances which you must navigate and ask yourself

always "What will happen if I engage in this course and what will not."

There is no absolute morality of any kind in Epicurus other than that Nature gives all living things the goal of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. There are no absolute rights and wrongs that apply to humans any more than in the animal world, where killing is a way of life.

There are many absolute ideals that are created in society which have a skewed approach to Nature's goal of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. For example: there is a kind of rule (but not a law) of "don't wear your shirt backwards" and you could say that doing so doesn't cause much pain to yourself or to others. Then there are religious rules such as for Christians it is "wrong to have sex before marriage". These two I think are skewed (or off) in that they point to moving toward pleasure and avoiding pain, but only in rare circumstances.

Then moving to laws of the land which are firmly established: is it wrong to kill a person unless there is some extreme case of self-defense. I would assert that this should be held as an "absolute law" but it exists because of the rational thinking mind and it is based on Nature's goal of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. Knowing that if someone were to try to kill me, that it would be very terrible and very painful and something I would not want, then I take on the idea of this as something to not do -- so this is the "golden rule". (The golden rule is do unto others as you would have done unto you or don't do what you wouldn't want done unto you).

Then going further there is the "platinum rule" which is a variation of the "golden rule". Following the "platinum rule" means thinking about and checking with people to know how the people around you would want to be treated. The platinum rule asks that you: "Do unto others as they would want to be done unto them." But again this is all about Nature's goal of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain, and thinking about and checking in to see what others would want.

---

## Post by "Cassius" of July 26, 2022 at 8:53 AM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Then moving to laws of the land which are firmly established: is it wrong to kill a person unless there is some extreme case of self-defense. I would assert that this should be held as an "absolute law" but it exists because of the rational thinking mind and it is based on Nature's goal of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. Knowing that if someone were to try to kill me, that it would be very terrible and very painful and something I would not want, then I take on the idea of this as something to not do -- so

this is the "golden rule". (The golden rule is do unto others as you would have done unto you or don't do what you wouldn't want done unto you).

Then going further there is the "platinum rule" which is a variation of the "golden rule". Following the "platinum rule" means thinking about and checking with people to know how the people around you would want to be treated. The platinum rule asks that you: "Do unto others as they would want to be done unto them." But again this is all about Nature's goal of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain, and thinking about and checking in to see what others would want.

I think what you are talking about here is probably best called something like "civil law." It is a law because the society has "agreed" in some way to make it so, and it 's going to vary widely by society. For example, most everyone agrees that there are certain instances in which there is "justification" for killing someone else (they are about to kill you). But evaluating all the circumstances of justification and killing is extremely complex. Who does that and how? It's my understanding that in Europe many more decisions are made by judges rather than juries, but here in the USA most decisions like this would be made by juries, given only very broad "rules" by the court.

So the point I think I am making is that yes all senses of "right" and "wrong" are ultimately going to derive from Nature through pleasure and pain (and perhaps anticipations?) but the actual implementation of them is a "civil" matter to be chosen (or not) by the people involved in a particular society.

So maybe the point also is that these golden and platinum rules ultimately derive from senses of pleasure and pain, but because they are implemented according to circumstance in different ways by different people, it's necessary to be careful in designating any particular human law as "natural."

I think this is a key theme of [Joshua](#) as well.

---

**Post by "Cassius" of July 26, 2022 at 9:00 AM**



Also to be clear here, what I maybe should have written rather than "there is no 'non-violence' principle in Epicurean philosophy" would be something more like "there is no absolute rule against the initiation of violence in Epicurean philosophy as there is in Libertarian philosophy."

That's more clear, and makes it easier to think of the example of Cassius Longinus in helping assassinate Caesar, which Cassius saw not only as not prohibited by Epicurean philosophy, but a logical conclusion of it in his circumstances.

---

## Post by “reneliza” of August 1, 2022 at 11:21 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

You will not in fact know what is virtuous from what is the reverse of each of those virtues unless you judge them from the perspective: "Do they lead to plesasure?"

Just quoting this for emphasis because it is the whole thing. I think this is the most practical/applied difference between Stoicism and Epicureanism, at least in the modern world.

---

## Post by “Cassius” of August 1, 2022 at 4:55 PM

### [Quote from reneliza](#)

I think this is the most practical/applied difference between Stoicism and Epicureanism, at least in the modern world.

Which may be deceptively simple at first glance, but is really about as different as can be:

It's the difference between (1) the virtues have absolute meanings that are the same for all people, all places, and at all times, versus (2) the virtues have no meaning except contextually as the represent tools or activities to be engaged in for the sake of pleasant living.

The stoics and similar would probably say that (2) means "you don't believe in virtue at all!" but I don't think that's a fair criticism: Epicurus just has a perspective on virtue that is logically consistent with what he has identified as the ultimate goal - living pleasurably - and it's the Stoics whose view mutates "virtue" into "doing what the gods have established to be done."

---

### **Post by “Kungi” of August 2, 2022 at 4:22 AM**

#### [Quote from reneliza](#)

I think this is the most practical/applied difference between Stoicism and Epicureanism, at least in the modern world.

I am trying for some time now to construct a real life example where a Stoic and an Epicurean will act fundamentally differently based on the Epicureans focus on pleasure instead of the Stoics focus on virtue in and of itself. In all examples I can think of they act the same.

[Cassius](#), [reneliza](#) can you construct such a real world example?

---

### **Post by “reneliza” of August 2, 2022 at 12:11 PM**

#### [Quote from Kungi](#)

#### [Quote from reneliza](#)

I think this is the most practical/applied difference between Stoicism and Epicureanism, at least in the modern world.

I am trying for some time now to construct a real life example where a Stoic and an Epicurean will act fundamentally differently based on the Epicureans focus on pleasure instead of the Stoics focus on virtue in and of itself. In all examples I can think of they

act the same.

[Cassius](#), [reneliza](#) can you construct such a real world example?

Before I answer this, I need to know if the stoics offered an answer to when the virtues contradicted each other. I didn't study stoicism very long before realizing the only time I agreed with Seneca with my whole self was when he was quoting Epicurus.

Where do you draw the line on courageousness? At what point does courage stop being a virtue? If there is no limit to courage, then it must be temperance that is limited instead, because it apparently doesn't apply to the other virtues. Is there a hierarchy or some way to know which of the virtues should prevail in a given situation?

Edit: FWIW, I'm completely with you on applied philosophy. I'm only interested insofar as it helps me to live my life. In my study of Stoicism I also kind of shrugged off and ignored that virtue was the goal instead of happiness, and treated them as though they were the other way around. When I had a very basic understanding of that philosophy (based on a 20 year old memory of philosophy 101 and conversations with people who'd studied Stoicism a little) I started creating my own life's philosophy which I called stoic hedonism (noting fully how much of a contradiction that sounded to most people.) But then I discovered Epicureanism and didn't have to continue building a whole philosophy from the ground up anymore ☐

---

## Post by "Cassius" of August 2, 2022 at 3:16 PM

### [Quote from Kungi](#)

I am trying for some time now to construct a real life example where a Stoic and an Epicurean will act fundamentally differently based on the Epicureans focus on pleasure instead of the Stoics focus on virtue in and of itself. In all examples I can think of they act the same.

That's a good way of getting at the difference.

We could go through each one but let's pick justice, because we have the last 10 PDs on that.

I believe Cicero was stating a position the Stoics would agree with when he described the nature of "true law," so a Stoic legislator would strive to enact the same basic laws at all places, all times, and for all people - everywhere - as close to the "will of God" as possible (since "God" is its enactor and enforcer).

An Epicurean legislator would take a totally different approach of basing the laws on local and changing circumstances with the goal of having the people involved live pleasurably as a result, knowing and providing for the change of those laws as circumstances change.

I think you can take each of the major categories of virtues and pretty easily construct examples.

In courage for example a Stoic soldier might take the position that "courage" requires him never to retreat in battle, while a more flexible Epicurean would easily see that effective courage might require temporary retreats in order to live to fight another day in hope of eventually winning the battle.

Ultimately the issue is that a true Stoic orients his view of virtue around his view of the origin of virtue - Divine will and or ideal forms (ultimately the same thing) while an Epicurean considers that to be ridiculous (since they don't exist). The Epicurean executes and judges his actions solely by what he thinks the result will eventually be in terms of the total of the pleasure vs pain that is relevant to him (which includes that of his friends whom he values).

I agree it is useful to think in terms of specific examples and it would be good to discuss hypothetical examples and/or deconstruct these.

---

## Post by “Matteng” of August 29, 2022 at 9:45 AM

Hi, Welcome Kungi 😊 ,

I also come from the Stoic camp 😊

I think the Stoics get a problem when defining "Virtue". Between the lines you can read from them, that virtue is good because (tranquility, eudaimonia, harmony ..... (other things like virtue itself).

But if you ask a Stoic directly, this response will come ( virtue for virtue ).

So I tried to find out what there is the core for them.

I´ve got: "Virtue is the rational and social thing which we should do."

Ok but what exactly is it ?

In a book from Donald Robertson ("Stoicism and Art of Happiness" )there it goes a little bit deeper, the answer is: "The beneficial and honourable".

And there it ends.

And for their "indifferents" (preferred/dispreferred): Choosing according the natural value.

By the way pleasure & pain is for Stoics complete indifferent. (In the past I thought pleasure preferred and pain would be dispreferred).

So here is the danger, that someone else will teach you what is "natural" (and the Stoics were often wrong about that, like the church ).

And so these Stoic teachers could use the abstraction and tell their students what is "natural, rational and social".

Like priest who define right/wrong and sin for their people.

And there is no natural limit in abstract objects.

Stoics & Epicureans could only come near each other when the "Beneficial&Honourable" would be equaled with "Pleasure".

(Pleasurable could also be fulfilling activities, character traits, personal values )

This would make sense, for example for health. The self-preservation is beneficial and pleasurable and threats to that are painful.

So I would ask a Stoic: Is there really a "virtue" which involves short and longterm pain and no pleasure. ? And is still a virtue ?

Maybe they would answer: Fulfilling your duty is important but brings maybe no pleasure.

->Response( If the duty isn't abstract but really important): So not fulfilling the duty would bring pain, so must be avoided. Fulfilling this duty is there a Pleasure, it removes disturbance in the soul.

Conclusion: The virtuous life = pleasant life and vice versa. If Pleasure and real value is bound with these virtues.