

KDF's Epicurean Outline

Post by "KDF" of March 25, 2018 at 10:58 AM

Thank you for allowing me to post on this forum. I would very much appreciate your feedback on my outline. It might be relevant to mention that I am fairly new to epicureanism. I happened upon (or more accurately re-happened upon after a 20+ year interval) Epicurus with a rush of satisfaction. I found epicurienism to be very consistent with my world view and principals.

A.) The Nature of the Universe

1. The universe is indifferent to the cares and wants of conscious beings
2. We live in a deterministic universe. There is no free will, but as conscious beings that can never be aware of our own lack of free will, this lack is not relevant to how we find meaning in our lives. (I think that Christopher Hithchens put it best when he said that he believes in free will, because he "has no choice.")

B.) Knowledge / Truth

1. We know what we can observe with our senses or has been passed on to us at a genetic level
2. There are biological limits to what we can know and observe (this does not imply a non-material universe)

C.) Ethics / How to Live

1. There is no absolute morality
2. Happiness is the ultimate goal to life
3. Financial independence greatly improves, but is not essential to, an individuals ability to attain happiness (I think that if Epicurus lived today that PDs 6, 7, 21, 39, & 40 would have referenced having F-U Money)
4. By reducing wants and needs one can greatly improve one's ability to achieve financial independence
5. All that we should ask from society is to ensure that no one be compelled by force to do anything against one's will
6. One has the ability to remove resentment and self-pity from one's thinking; removing resentment and self-pity greatly improves happiness
7. One should not suffer a contradiction in their principals; self-deception is the root of much unhappiness

Post by "Cassius" of March 25, 2018 at 11:57 AM

Welcome KDF! Thank you for posting your outline as it is a great way to discuss differences and similarities in Epicurean philosophy. My comments below are made in that spirit - not to criticize any aspect of what is "your" outline, but to comment on how it might differ from Epicurus:

First, as to "A.) The Nature of the Universe" - (2) you no doubt realize, but I must point out, that you are stating a position very different from Epicurus as to "free will." Epicurus contended that the swerve of the atom provides a basis for some freedom of will (within limits) and held that freedom to be essential to our confidence in being able to live happily.

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As to Knowledge and truth, it seems to me that your statements are generally consistent with Epicurus, but would require considerable more elaboration to be more clear. But I think especially as to (2) the observation that there are biological limits is an important aspect.

B.) Knowledge / Truth

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2. There are biological limits to what we can know and observe (this does not imply a non-material universe)

As to Ethics, again I think you are largely consistent with Epicurus. Certainly there is no absolute morality that applies everywhere and at all times. "Happiness" is clearly a word that approximates the goal, although there is a great need for clarity in explaining how happiness relates to pleasure. And clearly independence is also critical to the best life, as we can observe starting with how any young animal reacts when placed in a cage.

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Every one of your observations is worth much more detailed discussion. Welcome again to the forum, and I hope you will look around at the various topics and post questions and your own comments in the topics that interest you!

Post by “KDF” of March 25, 2018 at 12:29 PM

Cassius,

Thank you for the reply. It is a thrill to be able to discuss these points with those who have given thought to how to live and think consistently with epicureanism. Your points are productive and I value them.

I have invested much time exploring the question of free will, and have unfortunately spent a couple of years lost in the wilderness of this topic. However, I have developed a view that I believe is consistent with my overall philosophical principals: since it is not possible to be conscious of lacking free will, the absence of free will does not have direct relevance on how we live.

The fact that that the question of free will has been discussed for millennia, does make me feel like my perhaps over-simplified view may have a huge blind spot. To the extent that the question of free will is interesting to you I welcome any further thoughts.

Post by “Cassius” of March 25, 2018 at 2:10 PM

KDF would you mind if we move the discussion to the forum area set up for this topic. Could you please post a brief summary of your view here: ["Free Will" - Freedom of Choice Within Limits And Bounds vs. Determinism](#)

Post by “Cassius” of March 26, 2018 at 5:44 AM

KDF now that we have a thread started on three will it seems to me that at least three others of your points are also worth discussing further, these three being points I thin Epicurus would agree with but which are not frequently discussed in the way you state them. When you have time could you consider picking appropriate forums and posting new threads?

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I think point 3 probably falls within the Canon / epistemology discussion, resentment-pity under ethics, and the role of society perhaps under justice.

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of March 28, 2018 at 2:29 PM

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1. One has the ability to remove resentment and self-pity from there thinking; removing resentment and self-pity greatly improves happiness

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Interesting, what advice do the Epicureans give on this?

Post by “Cassius” of March 28, 2018 at 8:02 PM

That sounds to me like KDF has been reading a little Nietzsche, and then channeling THIS passage from Lucretius Book 3, (Martin Ferguson Smith), especially the sentence in bold:

"It is the same with human beings. Although education may give certain people equal

refinement, it cannot obliterate the original traces of each individual's natural disposition. We must not suppose that faults of [310] character can be extirpated, and that it is possible to stop one person from being excessively prone to sudden fits of rage, another from succumbing a little too readily to fear, and a third from accepting certain situations more meekly than one should. And in many other respects people must differ in character and consequently in behavior. But for the moment I cannot explain the secret causes of this variety or find names for all the atomic conformations that give rise to it. ***What I see that I can affirm in this connection is that the surviving traces of our natural dispositions, [320] which philosophy is unable to erase, are so very faint that there is nothing to prevent us from living a life worthy of the gods.***"

I think we could point to passages in Lucretius on death as being examples of removing self-pity by looking at the big picture. Dealing with resentment (at least in terms of feelings toward those who have more wealth and power than we do) could also be exemplified by numbers of passages in Lucretius.

(Now that I think about it, maybe not a Nietzschean reference, in that KDF wrote "self-pity" rather than "pity." I think I keep references to "pity" stored up in my mind because I find that a challenging issue on which I think Epicurus can also help.)