

A framed sign with a black border and a white background is mounted on a dark grey wall. The sign contains the text 'THE CONSOLATIONS OF PHILOSOPHY' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the sign, a wooden floor with vertical planks is visible.

**THE
CONSOLATIONS
OF PHILOSOPHY**



UNIT 4

AGENDA:

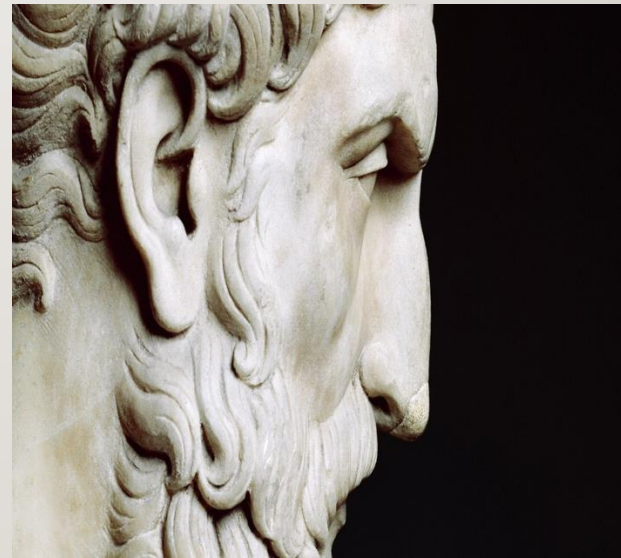
- LEARN HOW ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY CONTRIBUTES TO THE QUESTION “WHAT MAKES US HAPPY?”
- PROVIDE CURRENT EXAMPLES TO DEMONSTRATE THE RELEVANCE OF EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY TO MODERN LIFE

HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHER

TEXT

- Philosophy – not just an academic discipline but also instructions on how to live the “good life.”
- Hedonistic lifestyle with a twist.

EPICURUS (D. 271 B.C.E)



“PLEASURE
IS THE
BEGINNING
AND THE
GOAL OF A
HAPPY LIFE”

“PEOPLE
OUGHT TO
PURSUE
PLEASURE
AND AVOID
PAIN”

HEDONISM

A way of life that emphasizes the pursuit of excessive pleasures and enjoyment, often focusing on physical pleasures (i.e. food, sex, or relaxation) but it can also include intellectual or emotional pleasures.



HEDONISM

- Criticism: can lead to selfishness, short-term gratification and the expense of long-term well-being.



EPICUREAN HEDONISM

- I'm happy if you give me my good friends, life outside the big city, and moderation.
- Contrary to rumors about me being very inebriated, I prefer water over wine.
- Oh, and I forgot to mention, please give me olives, vegetables and cheese!
- I really love cheese to be spread on fresh bread!



WHAT WILL
MAKE ME
HAPPY?



WHAT WILL
MAKE ME
HEALTHY?



THE ANSWER?

- We are bad at answering these questions on our own, or intuitively.
- We need philosophy to help us answer these questions.

WHAT IS THE *CAUSE* OF OUR MISWANTING?

- Idle opinions (uneducated opinions of others)
- We all too easily skew our hierarchy of needs so that material interests come first and the unsaleable items (friendship, love, etc.) are pushed aside
- Seek pleasure, but not all pleasures.



WHAT *IS* AND *IS NOT* ESSENTIAL FOR HAPPINESS

Natural and necessary 😊

Friends

Freedom

Thoughts (about main sources of anxiety: death, illness, poverty, superstition)

Food, shelter, clothes

Natural but unnecessary

Grand house

Private baths

Banquets

Servants

Fish, meat

Neither natural nor necessary X

Fame

Power

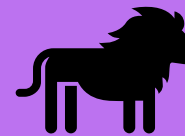
Immortality

ESSENTIAL ITEM #1: FRIENDSHIP



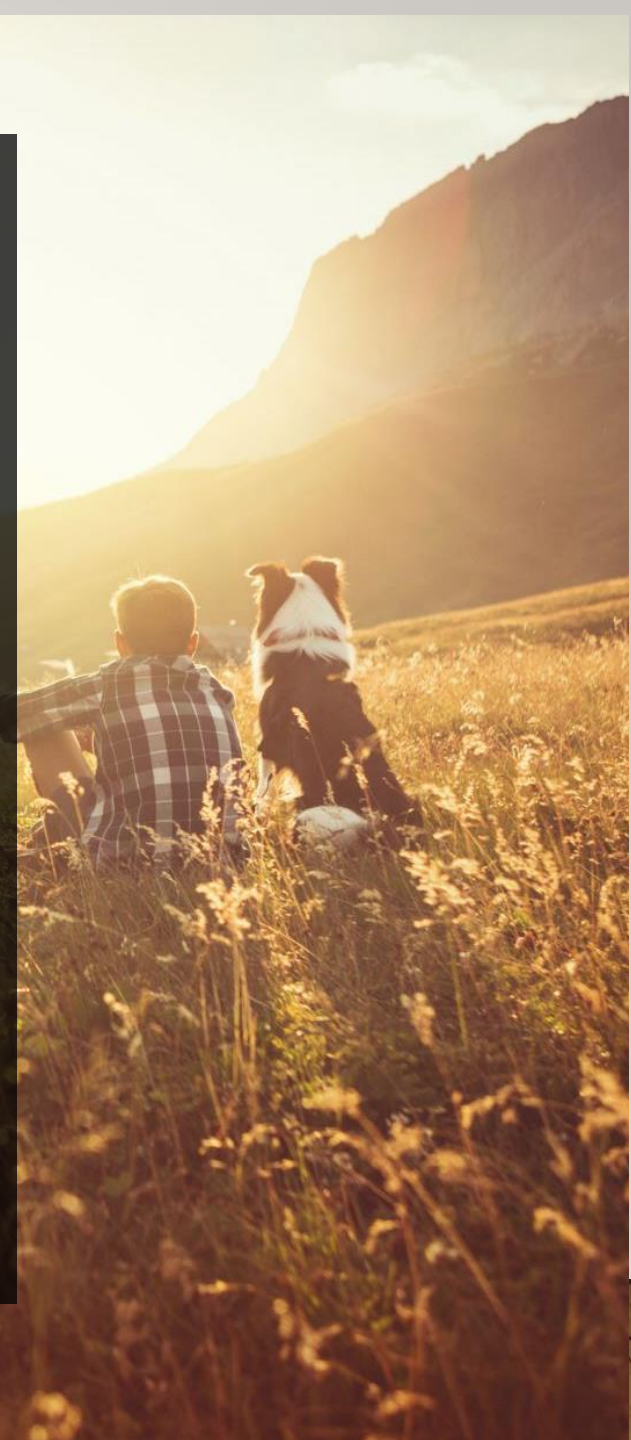
“Of all the things that wisdom provides to help one live one’s entire life in happiness, the greatest by far is the possession of friendship”

“Before you eat or drink anything, consider carefully with *whom you* eat or drink with *rather than what* you eat or drink: for feeding without a friend is the life of a lion or a wolf.”



CONSIDER THIS PASSAGE ON TRUE FRIENDSHIP (PAGE #57)

- We don't exist unless there is someone who can see us existing, what we say has no meaning until someone can understand, while to be surrounded by friends is constantly to have our identity confirmed, their knowledge and care for us have the power to pull us from our numbness.
- True friends do not evaluate us according to worldly criteria, it is the core self they are interested in; like ideal parents, their love for us remains unaffected by our appearance or position in the social hierarchy, and so we have no qualms in dressing in old clothes and revealing that we have made little money this year.
- The desire for riches should perhaps not always be understood as a simple hunger for a luxurious life, a more important motive might be the wish to be appreciated and treated nicely. We may seek a fortune for no greater reason than to secure the respect and attention of people who would otherwise look straight through us.
- Epicurus recognized that a handful of true friends could deliver the love and respect that even a fortune may not.



ESSENTIAL
ITEM #2:
FREEDOM

“We must free ourselves from the prison of everyday affairs and politics”

Commune with friends and family; less money but greater independence

“Among a group of friends living outside the political and economic center of the city, there was – in the financial sense – nothing to prove”
(p. 58)

The background features several grey silhouettes of human heads in profile, each containing a black question mark. A central head contains a blue lightbulb icon with radiating lines, symbolizing an idea or thought. A vertical white line is positioned to the left of the list items.

ESSENTIAL ITEM #3: THOUGHT

- Anxiety – wealth, fame, mortality
- Carefully consider how each person clings to the above items and how each is a cause for anxiety.
- Reprogram your schema



THE VIRUS: BIG CITIES, MATERIALISM, COMPETITION, AND ADVERTISEMENT FOR IT



HOW EPICURUS LIVED DIFFERENTLY

- “The task of philosophy was, for Epicurus, to help us interpret our indistinct pulses of distress and desire and thereby save us from ***mistaken schemes for happiness***. We were to cease acting on first impulses, and instead investigate the rationality of our desires according to a method of questioning close to that used by Socrates.... And by providing what might at times feel like counter-intuitive diagnosis of our ailments, philosophy would – Epicurus promised – guide us to ***superior cures*** and true happiness (p. 55).”

HOW TO DECIPHER TRUTH FROM FALSEHOODS: 5 STEPS



- 1. Identify a project for happiness.

In order to be happy on holiday, I must live in a villa.

- 2. Imagine that the project may be false. Look for exceptions to the **supposed link** between the desired object and happiness.
- Could I spend money on a villa and still not be happy?
- Could I be happy on holiday and not spend as much money as on a villa?
- 3. If an exception is found, the desired object cannot be a **necessary** and **sufficient** cause of happiness.
- Is it possible to have a miserable time in a villa if, for example, I feel friendless and isolated?
- Is it possible for me to be happy in a tent if I'm with someone I love and feel appreciated by?
- 4. Revisit and revise step 1.
- 5. True needs may now seem very different from the confused initial desire.



SEE PAGE 67 IN YOUR ARTICLE

STOA:

Having already reached the sunset of my life (being almost on the verge of departure from the world on account of old age), I wanted, before being overtaken by death, to compose a fine anthem to celebrate the fullness of pleasure and so to help now those who are well-constituted. Now, if only one person, or two or three or four or five or six... were in a bad predicament, I should address them individually... but as the ***majority of people suffer from a common disease***, as in a plague, with their **false notions about things**, and as their number is increasing (for in mutual emulation they catch the disease from each other, like sheep)... I wished to use this stoa to advertise publically medicines that bring salvation – Diogenes.

COUNTER ADVERTISING, BY DIOGENES IN OINOANDA

- Luxurious food and drinks ..in no way produce freedom from harm and a healthy flesh
- One must regard wealth beyond what is natural as of no more use than water to a container that is full to overflowing
- Real value is generated not by theaters, baths and ointments but by natural science.

(plus, friends and less anxiety from epicurus)

PHILOSOPHICAL EXERCISES

[HTTP://WWW.EPICURUS.NET/EN/MENOECEUS.HTML](http://www.epicurus.net/en/menoecceus.html)

- “The man who alleges that he is not yet ready for **philosophy** or that the time for it has passed him by, is like the man who says that he is either too young or too old for happiness”
- “Just as **medicine** confers no benefit if it does not drive away physical illness, so **philosophy is useless** if it does not drive away the suffering of the mind”
- So..... what **causes** our mental suffering?
 - Diagnose the cause of our problems and then find ways to solve the issue(s) at hand (prescription)
 - Ethical exhortations = medical prescription for the mind

EPICUREAN PHYSICS

- Atomistic universe; materialist universe
- The gods, according to Epicurus, do not care about the conduct of the world or of human beings.
- His view on immortality:
 - “Thus, death is nothing for us. So long as we are here, death is not, and when death is here, we are not.”

IMAGINE A MODERN DAY STOA

- “I wish to use this stoa to advertise publically *medicines* that bring *salvation*.”
- It’s safe to say that Epicurus, if alive today, would have much to say to us.
 - How likely do you think we would listen to his teachings?
 - How likely do you think you would listen to the teaching?

