

Christianity and Philosophy in the Early Roman Empire

Outline

1. Epicureanism
2. Stoicism
3. Platonism

Terms

Epicurus, Lucretius, materialist, hedonist, Stoicism, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, *eudaimonia*, Socrates, Plato, *The Republic*

Platonism:

Plutarch, *On Vice and Unhappiness*, 2: Vice makes all men completely miserable, since as a creator of unhappiness it is clothed with absolute power, for it has no need of either instruments or ministers. But whereas despots, when they desire to make miserable those whom they punish, maintain executioners and torturers, or devise branding-irons and wedges; vice, without any apparatus, when it has joined itself to the soul, crushes and overthrows it, and fills the man with grief and lamentation, dejection and remorse.

Epicureanism:

Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings*: It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and honorably and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and honorably and justly without living pleasantly. Whenever any one of these is lacking, when, for instance, the man is not able to live wisely, though he lives honorably and justly, it is impossible for him to live a pleasant life.

We have been born once and cannot be born a second time; for all eternity we shall no longer exist. But you, although you are not in control of tomorrow, are postponing your happiness. Life is wasted by delaying, and each one of us dies without enjoying leisure.

Of our desires some are natural and necessary, others are natural but not necessary; and others are neither natural nor necessary, but are due to groundless opinion.

Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which is associated with the apprehension of being discovered by those appointed to punish such actions.

Stoicism:

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 3.6: If mortal life can offer you anything better than justice and truth, self-control and courage – that is, peace of mind in the evident conformity of your actions to the laws of reason, and peace of mind under the visitations of a destiny you cannot control – if, I say, you can discern any higher ideal, turn to it with your whole soul. But if nothing seems to you better than the deity which dwells within you, then leave no room for any rival pursuits.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 4.5: Death, like birth, is one of Nature's secrets: the same elements that have been combined are then dispersed.