

# Epicureanism

*The Pleasure Principle*

# Epicurus

- The founder of the Epicurean School was Epicurus (342-270 B.C.)
- In 306 B.C., he opened a school at Athens in his own garden.
- Epicurus was a cultivated and fashionable man, and his school became a center of aristocratic life for his friends and disciples.

# Adherence to Logic

- The Epicureans were like the Stoics inasmuch as they recognized only sense knowledge as valid and reduced ideas to images of many similar sensations.
- They were opposed to the Stoics on the question of what makes for truth.
- They believed that the truth was the subjective evidence produced by the senses.

# Metaphysics

- Epicurus noted that two impediments hinder man from a happy life; fear of God and the horror of death.
- To overcome these he adopted the atomic doctrine of Democritus, in which there is neither fear of God nor horror of death, since everything is nothing more than an association and dissociation of atoms.

# Ethics

- Nature and reason show that pleasure is the only good and pain the only evil.
- Animals, guided by nature, are inclined to seek pleasure and flee pain. Man must do likewise to attain a state of tranquility.
- Epicurus also noted that the root of all evil is the desire for pleasure. According to his observation, he classified all goods according to those which may be desired and those which must be avoided.

# Ethics Continued

- These are:
  - (1) natural and necessary goods;
  - (2) natural and unnecessary goods; and
  - (3) unnatural and unnecessary goods.
- The Epicurean must be satisfied only with the goods of the first class, and he must renounce those of the second and third class.

# Ethics Continued

- With the goods of the first class (food and clothing) the Epicurean obtains tranquility of body.
- by renouncing the goods of the second and third class (family and honors) he obtains tranquility of spirit.
- Epicurus did not, however, renounce friendship and the pleasures of art, both of which he considered necessary to remove the discomforts of life.

# Religion

- Epicurus admits the existence of Gods who live a happy life in the void space of the sky.
- However, they do nothing for man, neither good nor evil.
- Epicurus pays respect to them for aesthetic reasons, just as he respects the statues in his garden.



# Summary

- The pleasures of the mind are declared to be superior to those of the body.
- Epicurean pleasure is not sensuality, it is the highest Good of every individual.
- It is not the pursuit of the coarse and violent pleasures of sense but the equable, moderate, and enduring pleasures of the mind and of friendship.