

Critical Thinking and the Good Life

Chapter 15

Learning Objectives

- After reading this chapter, you will be able to:
 - 17.1 Discuss the meaning of the good life in relation to the diversity all around us.
 - 17.2 Analyze the need to use critical thinking in developing your own morals.

What is good, what is right?

- What is the right way to live? What is the right thing to do? These crucial questions about an examined life themselves might seem to address separate issues, and deep divides even within each question can confound the best of us. Yet, it is precisely by reaching for the best in us, by thinking critically about our possibilities, and by recognizing our differences that we may approach answers to both questions.

Pluralism and Diversity

- The good life must include our recognition of this diversity. The good life must take into account our relations with those who disagree with our choices only because we all seem to be in the same boat.
- The good life must begin with an open-mindedness and a capacity to engage different points of view.
Pluralism is a reality, but pluralism cannot confuse the critical analysis of moral values

Why is there so much evil?

- Epicurus was a materialist philosopher who followed the lead of the early pre-Socratic atomists and believed that there was no afterlife or indeed nothing otherworldly about our existence. He was particularly vocal about the problem of evil, a subject that challenges philosophers and theologians to this day.
If God is omnipotent, Epicurus, asked, why doesn't he eliminate evil? If God is unable to do that, then he is not omnipotent; if he is able to eliminate evil but doesn't, then he must be evil himself.

Ataraxia

- With a nod to Aristotle, Epicurus developed a moral philosophy that values happiness as our ultimate goal in life, a happiness achievable by not fearing death, by enjoying life's small pleasures, and by finding guidance in the pursuit of wisdom.
- Cultivating friendships and living a good life consisted of achieving freedom from worry, what he called *ataraxia*. That, according to Epicurus, was the goal of any lifetime.



Ethics, Reason and The Good Life

- Ethics is a complex subject, difficult to isolate and tough to pin down. Theories conflict with each other as much as they can illuminate each other. The different moral theories discussed in this book can illuminate each other and help you find your own moral strategies and critically strengthen your own principles. Clarity is a desired goal that is not always reached, but action is a necessity.
