Hellenistic & Roman Philosophy (a)

Theories that focus on practical questions of the good life for individuals. This week, Epicureanism and Cynicism.

The ethical philosophy of Epicurus consists mainly of advice for living moderately but pleasurably. The key is to acquire pleasure but avoid pain.

Hedonism, as a philosophical doctrine, has two forms.

b) Psychological Hedonism – men pursue pleasure

c) Ethical Hedonism – men ought to seek pleasure

Philosophies of Despair

**Stoic**: The Stoic is telling you to get rid of your fear to learn to be indifferent to the world.

**Epicurean:** The Epicurean says we should strive to live moderately but pleasurably.

**Cynic:** The Cynic felt that they were powerless to prevent the collapse of the world in which they lived hence they renounced the world.

Critique of Epicurus

a) Violates our ordinary feeling about what constitutes moral behavior.

b) As a purely scientific account of men’s conscious behavior it doesn’t appear to withstand scientific scrutiny.

c) The theory is trivial

Cynicism

The belief that civilization is worthless. If salvation is to be found it is to be found in a rejection of society and a return to the simple life.