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Letter to Menoeceus - Epicurus - Translated by Robert Drew Hicks - Epicurus; 341–270 BC, was an ancient Greek philosopher as well as the founder of the school of philosophy called Epicureanism. Only a few fragments and letters of Epicurus's 300 written works remain. Much of what is known about Epicurean philosophy derives from later followers and commentators. For Epicurus, the purpose of philosophy was to attain the happy, tranquil life, characterized by ataraxia—peace and freedom from fear—and aponia—the absence of pain—and by living a self-sufficient life surrounded by friends. He taught that pleasure and pain are measures of what is good and evil; death is the end of both body and soul and should therefore not be feared; the gods neither reward nor punish humans; the universe is infinite and eternal; and events in the world are ultimately based on the motions and interactions of atoms moving in empty space. Epicurus is a key figure in the development of science and scientific methodology because of his insistence that nothing should be believed, except that which was tested through direct observation and logical deduction. He was a key figure in the Axial Age, the period from 800 BC to 200 BC, during which, according to Karl Jaspers, similar thinking appeared in China, India, Iran, the Near East, and Ancient Greece. His statement of the Ethic of Reciprocity as the foundation of ethics is the earliest in Ancient Greece, and he differs from the formulation of utilitarianism by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill by emphasizing the minimization of harm to oneself and others as the way to maximize happiness.

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