

The Ethics of Epicurus and its Relation to Contemporary Doctrines by Jean-Marie Guyau. Edited by Testa and Ansell-Pearson, translated by Testa

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I finished reading the chapter in which Guyau says “The good then is serenity.” The preceding pages of the chapter contrast Aristippus’ notion that there exists an indeterminate state between pleasure and pain – and Epicurus’ rejection of such a state. For Epicurus, *hedone/aponia/atarxia* (and *eudaimonia*) congeal, as it were – sometimes subsumed under the heading of just *hedone* (or perhaps *eudaimonia**).

In this schema, so-called kinetic pleasure is the active (and enjoyable) response to some *pone* – such as hunger. Pleasure comes from both satisfaction of the hunger and from the sensual taste of the food (however simple). The afterward feeling of satisfaction and contentment is also pleasure (so-called katastemic?).

In rejecting Aristippus’ neutral state, Guyau uses the word “serenity” to refer to the ability to generally sustain that state of *hedone/aponia/atarxia/eudaimonia*. That is, for him, the ultimate hedonic *telos* – even if perfectly achievable only by an archetypal Epicurean “sage.” (Though Guyau also seems to affirm that – with attention to a due natural frugality/simplicity – such an ideal is within the grasp of most of us, which Epicurus intended.)

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* I do not see *hedone/aponia/atarxia* as instrumental virtues aiming at *eudaimonia* – as if that were some other value-in-itself. I rather see a eudaimonic life as constitutive of the most pleasurable/pleasant life I can put together. Eudaimonia is not separable from hedone.