

# Psychology Today Article: "Frederick the Happy: The Old Fritz was an Epicurean."

Post by "Cassius" of August 25, 2019 at 11:26 AM

[Martin](#) - Have we found the 200 line poem on pleasure that is referenced here? Do you have a link we can post here?

Frederick left no doubt about his Epicureanism. In 1749, at the age of 37, he published a 200-line poem called *On Pleasure*. Blanning (p. 156) reports that in it, Frederick "begins with a dismissal of the intense but short-lived and dangerous carnal delights offered by prostitutes" (much like Epicurus did) but that he seeks to "combine a hundred different pleasures to create just one."

"He declared that he would," reports Blanning, "always follow the Epicurean gospel." Epicurus's term for this one pleasure is *ataraxia*, a pleasant, untroubled state of mind. An Epicurean is not obliged to maintain this state at all times but is encouraged to follow its guiding light. Frederick did, and this may be, in no small measure, what made him great.

#### **Ataraxia, Shenotaxia**

The poem 'On Pleasure' referred to by Blanning appears to not have been Frederick's only effort in that direction. Hadley (2018) reports that a 1740 poem from the King's pen was 'recently discovered' in a Berlin archive. Its title, *Le Jouissance*, might be translated as pleasure, joy, or orgasm, and its lyrics leave no doubt that the latter loomed large. "Trembling with excitement," Frederick recalls his friend's Algarotti's "vigorous desire in full measure." Lust overcomes prudential ethics. Using a translation by Giles MacDonogh, Hadley delivers Frederick's conclusion that