

# Contemplative Isolation and Constructive Sociability in the Epicurean Tradition

Post by “Don” of October 12, 2021 at 6:06 AM

I differ with the author's translation of ἀταραξία (ataraxia) as "impassiveness" and would use something like "tranquility," but I find the paper overall very compelling and thought-provoking. Final excerpt below:

"While making his final catechistic efforts in Book 6, the poet can legitimately hope that his student sees the true nature of the imperturbable gods and approaches their shrines "with an untroubled breast" (placido cum pectore, 6.75) - which, of course, cannot be done by common worshippers and could not be done by the reader himself at the start of his textual pilgrimage. Creating an untroubled breast (or placidum pectus) is the fundamental purpose of all the six books of De Rerum Natura, whose contemplative devices are carefully modelled on the traditional Epicurean practice of philologia medicans - the therapeutic reading, analysis, and memorization of Epicurus' writings that, as Lucian reminds us, could "produce peace (εἰρήνη), impassiveness (ἀταραξία), and freedom (ἐλευθερία) in readers".<sup>101</sup>