

# On Malte Hossenfelder's book "Epikur"

Post by "Don" of November 13, 2021 at 7:15 AM

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

I would say that ataraxia is a way of experiencing some (any) other mental or bodily pleasure (without disturbance). I am still firmly maintaining that "absence of something" is not something that is a positive feeling or experience. It is something we can define as desirable, like absence of roaches in your house, but when you are experiencing absence of roaches as a good thing you are really experiencing your house in a way you like to experience it - without roaches.

I'm going to push back on your analogy here. I see this "ataraxia is the lack of something" a lot in both statements favorable to this forum's interpretation and antagonistic to it. It seems people get hung up on the a- "not" prefix. Ataraxia being translated as "lack/absence of x" where x is trouble, anxiety, or something else negative misses the boat. Yes, it is technically an "absence" of trouble in the mind but it describes a positive feeling. Epicurus included it in his list of pleasures, so it is a feeling of pleasure. We feel something positive. A better translation may be calmness, tranquility, peace of mind to get away from that un- or a- prefix. The metaphor used sometimes is a calm sea. It is a positive quality.

So, to go back to your post:

It's not "a way of experiencing some (any) other mental or bodily pleasure (without disturbance)." Ataraxia is itself a pleasurable experience of calmness and tranquility in the mind, just as aponia (another pleasure singled out by Epicurus) is a pleasurable feeling of being well-rested, not fatigued or feeling any bodily pains. I imagine soaking - luxuriating - in a hot bath. Translating ataraxia and aponia simply as a "lack" or "absence" of something does a disservice to the positive qualities inherent in those stable states of mind and body.