

# Why Tranquility Should Not Be the Main Goal for an Epicurean

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 26, 2021 at 5:04 PM

My newest blog entry, a "common sense" approach, that should align with the views of most on this forum:

## Quote

In this blog I want to step outside the bounds of classical Epicurean scholarship and explore pleasure and tranquility using a simple “common sense” approach. Pleasure and tranquility need not be mutually exclusive. Not all stress should be avoided and modern Epicureans should move away from seeing tranquility as a main goal.

Epicureans want to live enjoyably and happily, yet modern life is far from tranquil and can create a lot of stress. As modern Epicureans we can see that some people greatly enjoy excitement, activity, and stimulation, and other people enjoy quietude, relaxation, and tranquility. Introverts are estimated to be 25% of the population, and tend to desire more tranquility than extroverts. So keeping in mind that there can be differences in temperament, it makes sense that what is considered pleasurable will also depend on temperament. It would be wrong to impose any one group’s preferences onto another group.

For the sensitive constitution of introverts, the right level of tranquility can be deeply pleasing. Believing that tranquility leads to an enjoyable and happy life, they will limit certain activities and there will be many activities they would never do. However, if they don’t live independently in a remote or rural location, they will need to decide how much stress they want to take on, and make choices. This will often be by trial and error.

With our common modes of transportation, our speed of life is much faster than in the time of antiquity. The structure of 21st century civilization is stressful, complex, and specialized. At the time of Epicurus, life would have very easily and naturally fallen into a simple and tranquil structure, but now it would take much more effort to recreate the tranquility of Ancient Greece. What was tranquil then, to us now appears as an ascetic lifestyle. Our modern brains are now wired for a certain level of stimulation, and the happiest life will need to find the most agreeable level of mental and sensory stimulation. Too much tranquility can become unhealthy and for some can lead to feelings of emptiness, lethargy, and even lead to depression. So for these reasons it becomes questionable as to whether setting tranquility in life as a main goal will result

in the most happy life. In addition, human beings are social animals and need to interact regularly with others to experience feelings of belonging and security. All social interaction contains within it a certain level of stress, but the goal of attaining pleasurable social interactions will help guide the modern Epicurean.

While the introverts might focus on modulating the level of stress in their lives, the other more extroverted folks will be busy taking on more challenges and living a much more active lifestyle. They will seek out adventure and novel sensory experiences. They will enjoy a lively environment that tickles the heart and mind with pleasure and joyful social interactions.

Regardless of introvert or extrovert tendencies, some stresses in life actually do lead to a kind of mental pleasure that cannot be produced by any other way. One example is participating in a gathering of people. With the right kind of people and in the right setting, the kind of joy that can well up within the heart cannot be found in solitude. And yet again this may best be enjoyed by those who have learned how to navigate a social environment. It is possible to learn and practice socializing in order to move from introvert to ambivert, and I would greatly encourage any introverted Epicureans to put effort into this, as the rewards are great.

Extroverted Epicureans already know and enjoy the pleasure of socializing, and they can help the introverts ease into the social fabric of a community, through thoughtful questions that pull introverts into conversation. Introverted Epicureans can also be of service to the community by bring the gifts they have learned through mastery of their sensitivities. They can help modulate the energy level if it gets too fast or loud, by requesting a resting break during community discussion. When attending a party and the dancing has ended, they can bring in more flowing soothing music conducive to good conversations.

The best kinds of gatherings would be between Epicureans who put forth the enjoyable meeting of the mind and the heart, as the agreed upon social goal. They would have no need for the social behaviors that cause stress, because they would set aside competition for attention, passive aggressiveness, pessimism, irritability, impatience, and harsh judgements. They would focus on sharing the joys of insight into the Epicurean philosophy and embody any kind of behavior that leads to pleasurable and agreeable friendship and conversation: smiles, encouragements, positivity, patience, clear and direct speaking, warm greetings and farewells of kisses and hugs. This kind of gathering would be stimulating for the mind and the senses, and yet enjoyable, and it very well could be considered both tranquil and stimulating at the same time.

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