

Why Tranquility Should Not Be the Main Goal for an Epicurean

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One point of interest I've observed while documenting translations is the semantic treatment of pain. Epicurus uses either *algoun* or *lypoumen* (or inflections thereof) when referring to pain. *Algoun* seems to describe all forms of pain, both physical and psychological. *Lypoumen*, on the other hand, is almost exclusively used to describe mental anguish. Several times, Epicurus has to preface the word *algoun* with *sarks*, meaning "flesh" or "body" to distinguish the physical nature of *algoun* because there **is no** word for "*just physical pain*". *Algoun*, by itself, is not enough to indicate the quality of the pain. Overwhelmingly, Epicurus uses the word *algoun*, **by itself**, without distinguishing whether the Pain is mental or physical.

Based on the words he chooses to use in the *Doxai*, the concept of bodily discomfort and mental anguish are both subsumed under the larger category of Pain. Epicurus identifies the goal of life as relieving pain (all pain), not *just* mental anguish. Prioritizing mental tranquility without addressing physical circumstances is the beginning of delusion.

Even when dying of kidney stones, *aponia* is still relevant: adjust your position to ease the tension in your joints, consider the consequences of adopting a better posture, regulate fluid intake to manage the discomfort, find your "goldilocks" zone so you feel cool and at ease, keep a towel or cloth around to absorb perspiration, ask to be surrounded by friends and smiling faces rather than a cold, lonely hospital bed. To deny any of these comforts is to neglect the needs of the body and dull the very sensory mechanisms that allowed us to understand disease in the first place.

I challenge anyone with a viscous hangover to stand in front of a class and convince a room full of students that mental tranquility, by itself, is enough to allow them to overcome their vicious hangover. Not gonna happen.