

# Is it true that "ataraxia is not physical pleasure, or even mental pleasure, but a state of inner calm?"

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2017 at 3:25 PM

[5 hrs](#)

Discussing translations: when we talk of pleasure do we mean hedone, ataraxia, euthymia or terpsis? For Epicurus Ataraxia is the greatest good, but ataraxia is not physical pleasure, or even mental pleasure, but a state of inner calm.

## Comments

[Cassius Amicus](#) type unknown

**[Cassius Amicus](#) " when we talk of pleasure" -- I get nervous about that question myself as I know so little Greek. To avoid reading too much into a single word I always want to know the sentence and the context.**

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [5 hrs](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) type unknown

**[Jimmy Daltrey](#) It's like with the Bible (don't shoot me I'm an atheist) Hell (a good Viking word, not even vaguely Greek, Aramaic or Hebrew) is used to translate Sheol, Gehenna, Hades and Tartarus. As I said below, I think it best when discussing detail to stick with...[See More](#)**

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [5 hrs](#) · [Edited](#)

[Tomos William](#) type unknown

**[Tomos William](#) "I think it best when discussing detail to stick with the term originally used, otherwise one gets tied in knots quibbling over 21st century definitions of almost arbitrarily chosen equivalents in a distantly related language"**

**Even if we stuck with the original term, how could we hope to understand it without (implicitly or explicitly) presupposing '21st century definitions'?**

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [5 hrs](#) · [Edited](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#)

**[Jimmy Daltrey](#) That is up for discussion, however we don't end up with positively unhelpful definitions like "virtue" which in context has nothing to do with the**


implications of religious obedience we have now. "Happiness" is positively frivolous, and "pleasure" brings foot massages to mind.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [4 hrs](#)

Alexander Rios type unknown

**Alexander Rios** That's so funny, because its true. Out there in everyday land, many folk think of happiness as frivolous, and pleasure as foot massages.

LOL!

 type unknown

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [4 hrs](#)

Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Haris Dimitriadis type unknown

**Haris Dimitriadis** This is outright nonsense.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [5 hrs](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

**Jimmy Daltrey** I corrected a typo, does it make mores sense now?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [5 hrs](#)

Cassius Amicus

**Cassius Amicus** I am not seeing indications that the original post was edited. This is the version I am responding to: "Discussing translations: when we talk of pleasure do we mean hedone, ataraxia, euthymia or terpsis? For Epicurus Ataraxia is the greatest good, but ataraxia is not physical pleasure, or even mental pleasure, but a state of inner calm."

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [4 hrs](#)

Cassius Amicus

**Cassius Amicus** Somehow I did not read the second sentence you wrote, Jimmy!

 **That second sentence will take a lot of unwinding.**

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [5 hrs](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

**Jimmy Daltrey** There was a typo. Does it make any mores sense now?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [5 hrs](#)

Cassius Amicus

**Cassius Amicus** IF you refer to this form "For Epicurus Ataraxia as the greatest good, but is not physical pleasure, or even mental pleasure, but a state of inner calm." the answer is that it makes sense, but I will argue it is profoundly wrong / incomplete.

  type unknown

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [5 hrs](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

**Jimmy Daltrey** That Epicurus held ataraxia to be the greatest good or that ataraxia is not physical or mental pleasure? Or both?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [5 hrs](#) · [Edited](#)

Cassius Amicus

**Cassius Amicus** I would certainly argue against the second (that ataraxia is not physical or mental pleasure) and probably against the first (That Epicurus held ataraxia to be the greatest good) as well. The issue of "greatest good is very subtle and there is a direct quote from Epicurus on "the meaning of "good" which I will find and add here.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [5 hrs](#) · [Edited](#)

Cassius Amicus

**Cassius Amicus** Plutarch, That Epicurus actually makes a pleasant life impossible, 7, p. 1091A: Not only is the basis that they assume for the pleasurable life untrustworthy and insecure, it is quite trivial and paltry as well, inasmuch as their "thing delighted" - th...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [3](#) · [5 hrs](#)

Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

**Cassius Amicus** Jimmy I grant you that your second sentence can be found in various forms all across the internet, but there are serious problems with it. In our FILES section here there are articles by [Nikolsky](#) and Wentham which explain that ataraxia is not divorced from the ordinary concept of pleasure. Also, there is the much more detailed explanation of this in Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks on Pleasure" I will try to steer you to a couple of excerpts....

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/133-is-it-true-that-ataraxia-is-not-physical-pleasure-or-even-mental-pleasure-but-a/?postID=182#post182>

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [5 hrs](#)

Alexander Rios

**[Alexander Rios](#)** I don't pay attention so much.

The way I see it, using Dewitt terminology. Each emotion has one of two feelings attached to it. Pleasant and unpleasant. Also smoothness of transition avoids early saturation.

Our bodies are physical and chemicals need to be manufactured in order to maintain the different degrees of feeling. So food matters.

Experience of events depends on the availability of these chemicals and the rate at which they can be manufactured and the rates at which they can be emitted/transmitted and absorbed/re-bound.

Knowing these physics limits, I find it easier to spend more time in the "pleasant zone", and am more grateful for it too.

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [3](#) · [5 hrs](#) · [Edited](#)

Cassius Amicus

**[Cassius Amicus](#)** Gosling & Taylor, The Greeks on Pleasure, Chapter 19, "Katastematic and Kinetic Pleasures: "“Plato's and Aristotle's intellectual feats can only win one's admiration, but a cool look at the results enables one to understand how Epicurus might have seemed more in contact with the subject. For if we are right, Epicurus was not advocating the pursuit of some passionless state which could only be called one of pleasure in order to defend a paradox. Rather he was advocating a life where pain is excluded and we are left with familiar physical pleasures. The resultant life may be simple, but it is straightforwardly pleasant.”

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [5 hrs](#)

Haris Dimitriadis Image not found. type unknown

**[Haris Dimitriadis](#)** Thanks Cassius. I am really getting embarrassed when the central issue of our philosophy is doubted repetitively and we show to be so compromising and doubtful. There are certain axioms, one of which concerns pleasure, which leave little room for discussion. It is the case of take it or leave it. Pleasure is good, either energetic or static. Ataraxia is a static one but follows the kinetic. It does not come by introversion.

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [4](#) · [4 hrs](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

**Jimmy Daltrey** I am indeed asking questions Haris. I wasn't doubting pleasure, rather questioning what we mean by pleasure. I hope that is ok. I don't mean to undermine anything.

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [4 hrs](#)

Cassius Amicus

**Cassius Amicus** Jimmy I share Haris' frustration but it is not at you but at the general state of Epicurean scholarship. Especially if you are in England you will find no one questioning your formulation. But Haris is working on a book and I have been working here too to compile the authorities who are documenting that the general interpretation is incorrect. Unfortunately it takes a lengthy exposition to go through the sources and unwind how we got to the point where the impression has been given that ataraxia is divorced from ordinary pleasure. But the textual material is there and if one reads through the arguments and thinks about the entirety of the philosophy and its focus on the leading role of pleasure I think the errors in the prevailing view become clear. We can address specific questions and try to summarize the situation, but to examine the details of the history of the problem I don't think it's possible to get a good grasp without following the arguments of Gosling and Taylor, [Nikolsky](#), Wenham, DeWitt (and hopefully Haris when his book is published 1f609.png 😊 )

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [4 hrs](#)

Cassius Amicus

**Cassius Amicus** Image may contain: text

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [5 hrs](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

**Jimmy Daltrey** Good stuff, aponia is a further term to be explored.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [4 hrs](#)

Alexander Rios

**Alexander Rios** I like all the pleasant emotions and I don't see a need to try to filter/regulate them. Seek them. They are easy to find.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [3](#) · [5 hrs](#) · [Edited](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

**Jimmy Daltrey** What we I am trying to get to s to break down what we mean by

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/133-is-it-true-that-ataraxia-is-not-physical-pleasure-or-even-mental-pleasure-but-a/?postID=182#post182>

pleasant, what Epicurus meant.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [4 hrs](#)

Alexander Rios

[Alexander Rios](#) ok. I suppose I've given up, on word splitting, and fill in the gaps for daily practice, using my Canonic faculties. If I have my needs met, and my predictions of the near future are "more of the same", and I am being prudent (and not an ingrate) then pleasant emotions come easy, by action and by use of memory of past pleasant times, and detection and cheerful dismissal of imagined fearful predictions, that have little foundation.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [4 hrs](#) · [Edited](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Norman DeWitt, "Epicurus and His Philosophy," Chapter 12, the New Hedonism (e.g.: Even at the present day the same objection is raised. For instance, a modern Platonist, ill informed on the true intent of Epicurus, has this to say: "What, in a word, is to be said of a philosophy that begins by regarding pleasure as the only positive good and ends by emptying pleasure of all positive content?" This ignores the fact that this was but one of the definitions of pleasure offered by Epicurus, that he recognized kinetic as well as static pleasures. It ignores also the fact that Epicurus took personal pleasure in public festivals and encouraged his disciples to attend them and that regular banquets were a part of the ritual of the sect. Neither does it take account of the fact that in the judgment of Epicurus those who feel the least need of luxury enjoy it most and that intervals of abstinence enhance the enjoyment of luxury. Thus the Platonic objector puts upon himself the necessity of denying that the moderation of the rest of the year furnishes additional zest to the enjoyment of the Christmas dinner; he has failed to become aware of the Epicurean zeal for "condensing pleasure.")

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [3 hrs](#)

[Cassius Amicus](#) type unknown

[Cassius Amicus](#) I realize we are talking about ataraxia and not the katastematic/kinetic categories, but I believe that when it is seen that pleasure is a faculty of essentially a single nature it is easier to see that ataraxia is a term that describes a method/description of enjoying ordinary mental and physical pleasures:  
3)

Boris [Nikolsky](#), "Epicurus on Pleasure" ("The paper deals with the question of the attribution to Epicurus of the classification of pleasures into 'kinetic' and 'static'. This classification, usually regarded as authentic, confronts us with a number of problems and contradictions. Besides, it is only mentioned in a few sources that are

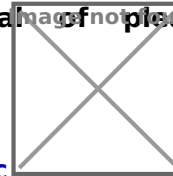
<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/133-is-it-true-that-ataraxia-is-not-physical-pleasure-or-even-mental-pleasure-but-a/?postID=182#post182>

not the most reliable. Following Gosling and Taylor, I believe that the authenticity of the classification may be called in question. The analysis of the ancient evidence concerning Epicurus' concept of pleasure is made according to the following principle: first, I consider the sources that do not mention the distinction between 'kinetic' and 'static' pleasures, and only then do I compare them with the other group of texts which comprises reports by Cicero, Diogenes Laertius and Athenaeus. From the former group of texts there emerges a concept of pleasure as a single and not twofold notion, while such terms as 'motion' and 'state' describe not two different phenomena but only two characteristics of the same phenomenon. On the other hand, the reports comprising the latter group appear to derive from one and the same doxographical tradition, and to be connected with the classification of ethical doctrines put forward by the Middle Academy and known as the divisio Carneadea. In conclusion, I argue that the idea of Epicurus' classification of pleasures is based on a misinterpretation of Epicurus' concept in Academic doxography, which tended to contrapose it to doctrines of other schools, above all to the Cyrenaics' views.")

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [3 hrs](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Jimmy I should also give you this link, where I have collected my largest list of cites on the nature of the goal of pleasurable living




<https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3...Jqv9p3bStOcZPac>

[Full Cup Fullness of Pleasure Model](#)

Link to Larger Version of Graphic It is observed too that in his treatise On the Ethical End he [Epicurus] writes in...

NEWEPICUREAN.COM

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Remove Preview](#) · [2](#) · [3 hrs](#)

[Elli Pensa](#) [Jimmy Daltrey](#) wrote : <<For Epicurus Ataraxia is the greatest good>> And Epicurus answers to him again and again : Hey my boy, "I do not know how I could conceive of the good without the pleasures of taste, of sex, of hearing, and without the pleasing motions caused by the sight of bodies and forms".  Life and joy and type unknown

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [19 mins](#)

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/133-is-it-true-that-ataraxia-is-not-physical-pleasure-or-even-mental-pleasure-but-a/?postID=182#post182>

[Elli Pensa](#) Profile picture bound or type unknown

**[Elli Pensa](#) Don't think it unnatural that when the body cries out, the soul cries also. The body says don't be hungry, don't be thirsty, don't be cold. It is difficult for the soul to prevent these cries, and dangerous for it to ignore the commands of nature because of attachment to its usual independence.(Epicurus).**

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [17 mins](#)