

# **"Lucretius on the Divine" - Dr. Christopher Eckerman**

**Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2022 at 5:45 PM**

This is the full statement of the G&T position which explains the value of ataraxia and aponia without mixing them up with "katastematic pleasure":

19.1.1. We would not pretend that these objections are conclusive, but they do indicate that certain styles of interpretation involve attributing rather obvious awkwardness to Epicurus. An interpretation which does not attribute them is thus far preferable. We shall now expound such an interpretation, and then proceed to defend it against at least the more obvious objections.

19.1.2. The passages quoted by Cicero in *Tusculan Disputations* (cf. 19.0.6) suggest a different picture of *aponia* and *ataraxia* whereby *aponia* is a condition of having sensory pleasures but with no accompanying pain, and *ataraxia* is a state of confidence that one may acquire such sensory pleasures with complete absence of pain. This confidence is itself a positive state. However unadulterated by pain one's sensory pleasures may be, one's pleasure is all too likely to be spoiled by various misapprehensions. These will be false beliefs about death, about the gods, about fancy diet, about the limits of bodily pleasure, about the desirability of long life and so on. These erroneous beliefs disturb the mind (cf. *PD* 10-12, 18-22) and their removal is required for *ataraxia* (cf. passages just referred to and also *DL* X.81-2, 124-6, 130-2). But for *ataraxia* more than the absence of false beliefs is needed: they have to be replaced by true ones. It is these that give confident expectation of a pleasant life, and so constitute the removal of anxiety. In short, those ancient critics who complained that Epicurus laid great emphasis on bodily pleasures would on this view be right: what is important is to get a life of sensory pleasure untroubled by pain; *ataraxia* is itself geared to *aponia*, and joy of mind generally is a matter of memory and expectation of unadulterated pleasure, based on true belief. The objection to the pleasures of profligates (*DL* X.131-2) and perhaps the only objection Epicurus has (cf. *PD* 10), is that they fail to remove anxiety. The point with profligates is, presumably, that they erroneously believe fine food to be necessary, fail to see when desire is satisfied, and so pursue their objectives to the point of consequent distress, and so foolishly fear, as threats to their good, things which should not be feared.